# PPMC MAGAZINE

SOUTH AFRICA

PHOTOGRAPHY, PAGEANTRY, MODELING AND COMPETITIONS

Kayleigh Kotze

Cara H Nigrini

Mila Meyer

Camelia Grobler

Artifex Creative

Fendi Mokadi

Issue 168

*Featuring* **National & International** *Models*

Cover Model

*Zara Ramos*

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PPMC MAGAZINE
PHOTOGRAPHY, PAGEANTRY, MODELING AND COMPETITIONS

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# MISS GLOBAL SOUTH AFRICA 2026

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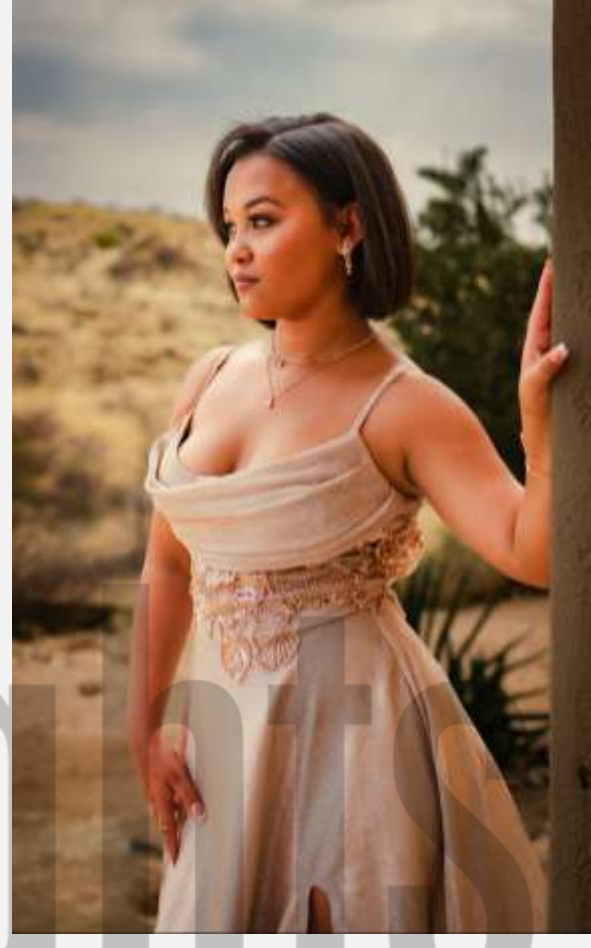
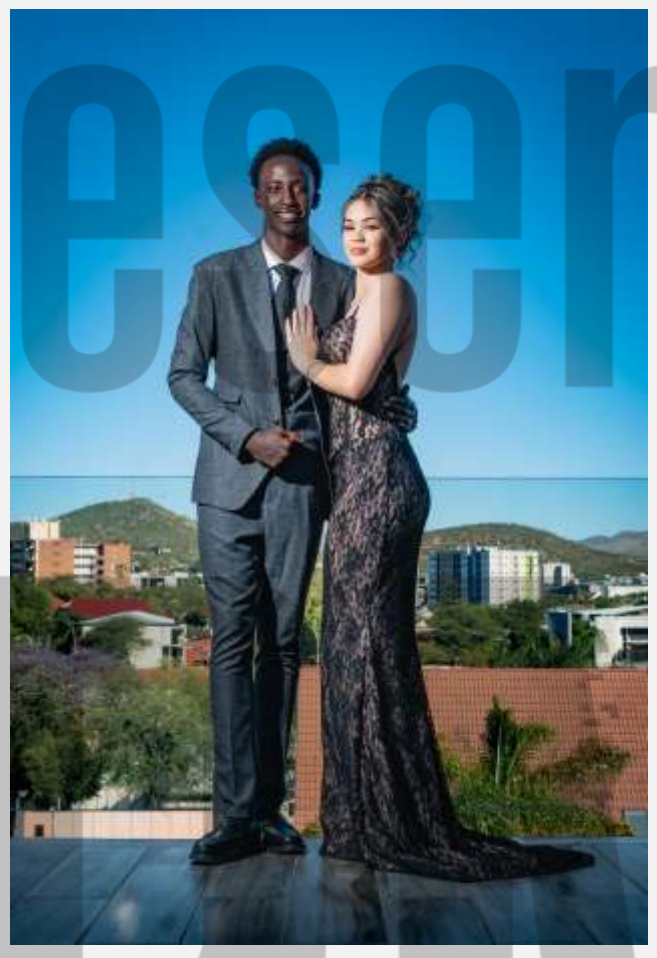
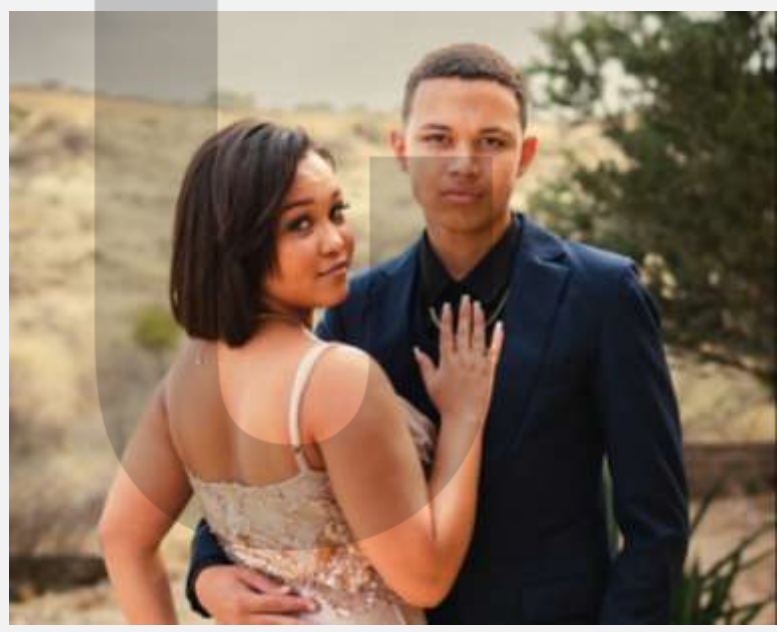


# Zanafric *Photography* with Alexander Pedro





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Reserved

#Phata

# Interview with Alexander Pedro

## Owner of Zanafric Photography

A story by:
Etaiya Briscoe

Alexander Pedro, owner of Zanafric Photography, has built a name for himself by keeping photography simple, authentic, and driven by light rather than expensive gear. “I wish I knew that I didn’t need a bag full of expensive gear or that it doesn’t have to be too technical to create art,” he admits. “For a while, I just played around, but the real growth happened when I realized that understanding light is more important than having the newest camera body.”

**Alexander’s journey into photography was anything but smooth. After losing his ten-year career in logistics and supply chain during a nationwide retrenchment in 2019, he faced an extended period of unemployment, worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic. “I have a speech impediment, I stutter.**

In 2023, while I was still unemployed and busy cropping a screensaver on my phone, I noticed something that triggered me to get a camera,” he recalls. Free shoots in Namibia helped him develop his skills and gradually attract clients. “I truly started learning when I had to deliver professional results to clients. There’s no better teacher than a deadline and the drive to maintain my integrity.”

When it comes to learning photography, Alexander points to social media as a goldmine. “I highly recommend watching behind-the-scenes content from photographers like Francisco Joël Hernandez and Rafe Grigar to see how they manipulate light in real time. YouTube is a beginner photographer’s friend.

You don’t have to attend school to learn the basics. It’s possibly the best way to create your own trends.” He also stresses self-assessment: “I am my own toughest critic. If I can’t see growth between two projects, I know I’m playing it too safe.” Alexander works with a modest setup: a Nikon D3500 paired with the Nikon SB-800 speedlight. “I started off with a 95cm Godox Octabox and later began using a reflective umbrella. Lately, I’ve been trying bare flash to create deep shadows and high contrast. It’s a modest setup, but it’s what I used to build my entire Namibian portfolio.” His favorite lens is the Nikon 35mm f/1.8G. “It’s versatile, sharp, and allows me to create that beautiful depth of field even outdoors. It’s been my ‘old faithful.’”

Minimalism defines his approach to shoots. “I grab my camera, one lens, a light stand, and a single speedlight. That’s all I need.” He warns beginners against waiting for perfect conditions. “In the real world, you have to make the light work for you, even when it’s not ideal.” He prefers settings between f/1.8 and f/4, with a shutter speed around 1/200, adjusting ISO to match the mood.

Some of Alexander’s favorite shoots are deeply personal. “My favorite is definitely the Matric Farewell shoot for Simoné in Windhoek on the balcony of the Marigold Hotel. Everything clicked—the lighting, the mood, the composition. It was the moment I felt my true style finally surfaced.” He also cherishes three recent shoots: a couple in Rehoboth during a rainy day, a Valentine’s shoot in the veld, and a farewell gift shoot for his very first paid client in Namibia.

He keeps focus by connecting with his subjects. “If the energy is right, the focus comes naturally. I also try to stay consistent with my editing, which is good for a great portfolio.” Social media, he says, has been invaluable. “It’s how I found my inspiration and how PPMC Magazine found me! It’s the modern-day gallery.” He names Rafe Grigar, Francisco Joël Hernandez, and South African Carol Visser as major influences, particularly for their work with lighting and composition.

Alexander’s advice for aspiring photographers is simple: “Don’t wait until you think you’re ‘ready.’ Go out, take the shots, and learn under the pressure of having to deliver. Just enjoy the people, and the result of the work will speak for itself.” Inspiration, he says, comes from playing with light and exploring new ideas. His recent projects, like his portrait work and matric farewell series, reflect his growing signature style. “Every time I click the shutter, I’m closer to the vision in my head,” he says. “It shows I can adapt and innovate when things don’t go as planned.”

Working for a magazine, Alexander sees both challenge and opportunity. “Shooting for a magazine means my work has to tell a story that resonates even without me being there to explain it.” To create a comfortable environment with models, he uses humor. “If I can get them laughing and feeling relaxed, the poses become natural and the photos feel more authentic.”

**Lately, he’s drawn to dramatic, moody outdoor lighting and the Gen Z preference for natural, cinematic storytelling. For Alexander, photography isn’t just about capturing an image—it’s about capturing a feeling.**

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Sara H
Nigrini

MISS GRAND SOUTH AFRICA 2026 FINALIST

#Finalist

# Interview with Cara H Nigrini

## Miss Grand South Africa 2026 Finalist

When Cara received the call that she had been named a finalist for Miss Grand South Africa 2026, she could hardly believe it. “I was absolutely shocked and thrilled,” she says with a bright smile. “I entered to expand my charitable mission to a bigger platform, but actually realizing I am a finalist is such an honor. I am so grateful to be jumping into this journey.” For Cara, the moment was not just about a title. It was about stepping into a space where her voice could reach further than ever before.

Cara explains that her decision to enter this year came from a deep sense of purpose. After finding success in her local campaigns, she felt ready for more. “Having found significant success in my local campaigns, I felt a calling to do more,” she says.

The organization’s focus on peace and social impact spoke directly to her heart. “It’s an honor to be part of an organization that celebrates a modern, multi-faceted woman. I plan to use this opportunity to bring my advocacy to the forefront, proving that beauty and a heart for service are a powerful combination.”

Her journey in pageantry has not been one she has walked alone. Cara credits much of her growth to her coach, Katryn Celliers. “My journey has been defined by the incredible mentorship of my coach, Katryn Celliers, who has helped me refine the technical skills and mental toughness needed for a stage of this magnitude,” she says.

Beyond that, she leans on her family and her pageant sisters. “True preparation isn’t just about individual excellence; it’s about the spirit of sisterhood and empowerment. I’ve learned to lead by lifting others, and that sense of purpose is exactly what I bring to the Miss Grand South Africa stage.”

Representing her province is something Cara carries with pride. She speaks warmly about her home. “Our province is a blend of rich history, towering mountains, and a golden coastline—but its true beauty lies in its people,” she says. “I live this reality every day, and I am thrilled to use this platform to shine a spotlight on my home. I’m not just competing for a title; I’m competing for the community that made me the woman I am today.”

Preparation for the finals is serious work. Cara approaches it like an athlete. “I believe a Miss Grand representative must be an athlete in both body and mind,” she explains. Her training with The Fitness Maven focuses on endurance and posture. Mentally, she uses her fitness routine to stay sharp under pressure. “When you are physically strong and mentally clear, you are emotionally unstoppable,” she says. Gratitude for her sponsors and team keeps her grounded.

What sets Cara apart, she believes, is authenticity. “My competitive edge lies in my conviction to take up space and own it,” she says firmly. “I am not here to whisper; I am here to make an impact.” She hopes to inspire others to walk into any room with confidence. “Their true self is enough to change the game.”

The journey has not been without challenges. Balancing her professional life, advocacy work, and physical fitness tested her limits. “It was a true test of time management,” she admits. “Being a Miss Grand queen isn’t just about looking good; it’s about being organized and purposeful.” Her support system helped her find that balance.

At the heart of that support system is her mother. “My greatest inspiration is my mother; she is the sounding board for my wildest ideas and my greatest confidante,” Cara says. She also speaks highly of her professional team. “It takes a village to empower a Queen. Having that balance of maternal love and professional expertise is what gives me the strength to stand here today, ready to lead.”

For Cara, the Miss Grand platform in 2026 represents strength and courage. “As a professional model, I understand the power of a visual platform, but true leadership is about using that influence for impact,” she explains. Her focus is clear: fighting period poverty. “I am dedicated to ensuring that every girl has the resources and dignity she deserves to stay in school and pursue her dreams.”

If she wins the crown, Cara plans to push for period equity and education. “I don’t just want to wear the crown; I want to use it to bring the needs of my people to the national stage,” she says. On stage, she handles pressure by returning to her purpose. “When I walk onto that stage, I am thinking about the young girls I represent. Confidence isn’t about being perfect; it’s about walking with the certainty that I have a message to deliver.”

Through pageantry, Cara has developed skills in public speaking, strategic communication, and brand awareness. She has also strengthened her digital campaigning abilities. To young girls who dream of following in her footsteps, she offers simple advice: “Be unapologetic. Know you have the fighting spirit to cultivate your own path.”

Balancing pageantry with studies and career takes discipline. “I stay organized,” she says. “I’ve willingly sacrificed some personal time because I know the opportunities I’m pursuing now are directly building the future I want.”

Looking beyond 2026, Cara remains focused on growth. She plans to continue supporting her community, advance her career in TEFL teaching, and expand her work as a media personality and model. Whatever the outcome, one thing is clear: Cara is not standing on that stage for herself alone. She is standing for every girl who needs to know that her voice matters.

**Vote for Cara H Nigrini**

**Miss United Continents South Africa, Standard Bank, Branch code: 051001, Account: 061 976 660, Ref: Cara Votes**

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# Camelia Grobler

**When Camelia's name was announced as Mrs Curvè South Africa 2026, it was more than a winning moment. For her, it was a defining one. "Being crowned Mrs Curvè South Africa 2026 is both humbling and empowering," Camelia says. "It feels like the culmination of courage, growth, and stepping fully into who I was always meant to be."**

**She describes the crown not as a decoration, but as a duty. "This crown is not just a title — it is a responsibility to represent every woman who has ever questioned her worth and to remind her that she is enough, exactly as she is."**

**Camelia's journey to the stage is not conventional. A Lieutenant Colonel in the South African Army, she is used to discipline, structure, and service. For years, she believed that her identity existed mainly in uniform. "I once believed I could only exist in one space — in uniform," she admits.**

**Entering Mrs Curvè South Africa was a bold decision. "It was my declaration that I am multidimensional. I wanted to challenge the narrative that women, especially women in uniform, must shrink themselves to fit a box. I entered to prove that you can serve your country and still wear a crown."**

**Throughout the competition, Camelia carried a clear message: "Unapologetically HER." Through her empowerment movement, Mission: Fearless Femme, she encourages women to F.L.Y. — First Love Yourself. "When a woman truly loves herself, she moves differently, chooses differently, and leads differently," she explains. Her focus is simple but powerful. She wants women to rediscover their voice, confidence, and strength without feeling the need to apologise for who they are. Preparing for the pageant required more than rehearsing a walk. Camelia approached it with the same discipline she brings to her military career. "Preparation was holistic," she says.**

**It included physical training, disciplined nutrition, refining her public speaking skills, and aligning her personal brand. She invested in mindset coaching and worked hard on her presentation. But for Camelia, the most important work happened internally. "I prepared emotionally — because the crown must sit on a woman who is secure within herself."**

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#Pageant

# Interview with Camelia Grobler

## Mrs Curvè South Africa 2026

One of the most emotional moments came during her final walk. As she stepped onto the stage, she locked eyes with her daughter. “In that moment, it was no longer about me,” she recalls. “It was about legacy.” Camelia realised she was teaching her daughter something far bigger than stage presence. “I was showing her — in real time — that her dreams are valid and that no role in life should limit her potential.”

Camelia describes her personal style as bold, elegant, and powerful. She calls it “The Glam Soldier.” It reflects both her structured military background and her feminine confidence. “It is structured yet feminine, disciplined yet radiant,” she says. During the pageant, she chose silhouettes that celebrated her curves and colours that commanded attention. “I wanted every look to say: ‘Power can be glamorous.’”

Behind her success stands a strong support system. Camelia speaks warmly about her husband and daughter. “My family has been my anchor,” she says. “They reminded me why I started on the days when the journey felt overwhelming.” Even when self-doubt crept in, their belief in her stayed steady. “Their support gave me permission to go all in.”

Balancing a demanding military career, family life, and pageant preparation was not easy. Time was her greatest challenge. “Time management became a discipline of intention,” she explains. She planned carefully, set firm boundaries, and stayed focused on her purpose. “Growth requires discomfort,” she says. “I refused to let fear of judgment hold me back.”

For Camelia, empowerment is not about competition. “It is about elevating,” she says. She believes in creating spaces where women feel seen, heard, and capable. During her reign, she plans to expand Mission: Fearless Femme through workshops, empowerment events, self-defence initiatives, and confidence-building platforms. She is especially passionate about supporting women in uniform and young girls from underprivileged communities. One of her proudest projects is a self-defence activity book for children aged four to nine. The book teaches young children how to confidently defend themselves and take responsibility for their own safety. “The dream is to roll it out into underprivileged communities and reach as many kids as possible,” she says.

Winning the title has already shifted her life in meaningful ways. “It has expanded my platform and amplified my voice,” Camelia explains. She now sees herself not only as a titleholder but as a leader in empowerment spaces. On a personal level, the experience has strengthened her confidence. “When you step into your purpose, doors open,” she says.

Her advice to women considering pageants is clear and honest. “Do it for growth, not validation,” she says. “Enter knowing that the real transformation happens long before the crown is placed.” She encourages women to be authentic, refine their purpose, and invest in themselves without apology. “You are already worthy, with or without a sash.”

**Beyond the uniform and the crown, Camelia reveals a creative side that many may not expect. “Photoshoots are my art form,” she says with a smile. She thrives on reinvention and believes women are allowed to evolve at every stage of life.**

Looking ahead, Camelia’s goals are focused on impact. She plans to grow Mission: Fearless Femme across provinces, collaborate with brands aligned to empowerment, publish more educational resources, and mentor women stepping into leadership roles. Most of all, she wants every woman who follows her journey to understand one truth. “You are not limited to one identity,” she says. “You are allowed to be powerful, glamorous, disciplined, soft, ambitious — all at once.”

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# FENDI MOKADI

From her Soweto roots, Fendi Mokadi has become a tech-savvy entrepreneur, proud mother of two in Kempton Park, and Mrs South Africa 2026 semi-finalist, revolutionising early childhood development by blending digital tools with hands-on care to give every child an equal start.

#Finalist

# Interview with Fendi Mokadi

## Mrs. South Africa 2026 Semi-finalist

Fendi grew up in Soweto as the last born in her family, a proud member of the Zion church, never imagining that one day she would be building a name for herself in technology while running a daycare that changes lives. Today she lives in Kempton Park with her husband, Tshepiso Mokadi, whom she married in 2021, and their two boys. “I am a proud mom,” she says with a smile. “My family is my biggest motivation.”

Her leadership journey started early. At Auckland Park Preparatory School, Fendi was active and driven. She played team hockey, captained the netball team, swam for the B team, and served as head girl in Grade 7. In high school at Pretoria High School for Girls, where she boarded, she balanced sport and academics while stepping into more responsibility. In matric she served as an RCL member and Head of Hostel. “Leadership has always been part of who I am,” she says. “I never chased titles, but I always wanted to serve well.”

Fendi later studied at AFDA, where she completed a BCom in Business Innovation and Entrepreneurship, majoring in Marketing and Sales. She graduated with recognition for the best discipline in her year. It was there that her passion for technology came alive. “AFDA was different,” she explains. “We didn’t just sit in lectures. We built businesses, created apps, pitched for funding, and solved real problems. That experience changed my mindset completely.”

While her career in tech was growing, another calling was waiting. The daycare she now runs began as her late mother’s legacy. “When I stepped in, I realised how deep the need was,” she says. Now in her sixth year of running it, she has seen how critical early childhood development is. “People think looking after children is just keeping them safe. But shaping a child’s mind takes intention.”

Growing up in Soweto, Fendi saw the gap between well-resourced schools and those in disadvantaged communities. “Even as a child, I could see the difference,” she recalls. “When we talked about schoolwork, it felt like we were from different worlds. I never wanted any child to feel less than because of where they come from.”

That belief shaped her approach. At her NPO daycare, technology supports learning rather than replaces it. Children use tools such as Khan Academy Kids, YouTube Kids educational content, ABCmouse, Busy Shapes, and interactive storybook apps. “We rotate the children because we only have a few devices,” she explains. “We teach them how to tap, swipe, and follow guided lessons.” These are combined with puzzles, sensory play, flashcards, and building blocks. “It must always be balanced.”

Fendi also realised that parents needed support. “It’s not enough to teach the child,” she says. “We must equip the parent too.” She hosts sessions to build digital literacy so families can continue learning at home. Funding remains a challenge. “As an NPO, devices and data are not easy to access. We rely on donations and partnerships.”

The most rewarding moments, she says, are often simple. She remembers a shy little girl who refused to speak during circle time. “With patience and encouragement, she slowly opened up,” Fendi says. “Now she volunteers to lead the class and sings loudly. Watching her confidence grow was beautiful.” She also recalls a quiet little boy who once avoided activities. “The day he counted to 20 in front of the class with a big smile, I will never forget it.” Fendi adds, “I’m very intentional about making sure the boy child is not left behind.”

Being a woman in tech has not been easy. “Sometimes I walk into rooms where I’m underestimated,” she admits. “You have to prove yourself twice.” In the community, the challenges are different but just as real. “There is so much need. You want to do more, but funding is limited.” This year, Fendi stepped into a new chapter as a semi-finalist in Mrs South Africa 2026. “In my letter I wrote, ‘If not now, then when?’” she shares. “I am doing this to make my younger self proud and to bring awareness to early childhood development.” She reflects on her journey and smiles. “Who would have thought that I, a Zion girl from Soweto, would be writing my story for a magazine?”

Balancing tech, the daycare, family life, and the pageant programme takes faith and discipline. “God will never give you something you are not ready for,” she says. “Some days are overwhelming, but if I showed up and gave my best, that is enough.”

Her advice to other women is simple. “Go for it. Start where you are, with what you have. You don’t need to have everything figured out.”

Looking ahead, Fendi dreams of a South Africa where a child from Sandton and a child from Soweto can speak the same language of robotics, AI, and coding. She wants to expand Kagisong Day Care Centre into multiple branches and create workshops for teachers and parents. “Technology should not be a privilege,” she says. “It should belong to every child.”

For Fendi, the mission is clear. “Every child deserves a strong start. If we get the foundation right, we change the future.”

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# Cover Model

#Pageant

# Interview with Zara Ramos

## Miss Teen Grand South Africa 2025

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Facebook: @zandile.gladile.75
Photo credits: @king_kunta095

When Zara Ramos speaks about her journey, she does not begin with crowns or applause. She begins with a quiet little girl who preferred to stand on the sidelines. “I was very shy,” Zara says. “I stayed in my own little bubble and I never wanted to be in the spotlight.”

It was Zara’s mother who first saw something more. “She noticed a spark in me that I couldn’t see myself,” Zara explains. “She introduced me to pageantry gently. It was never about pressure. It was about helping me grow.”

At first, Zara was drawn to the glamour. “I loved the gowns and the crowns,” she says with a smile. “It felt magical to dress up and step onto a stage. For a little girl who was shy, it felt like I belonged somewhere special.” But as the competitions continued, Zara began to understand that pageantry was about much more than appearance. “It became a space where I found my voice,” she says. “I realised the crown stands for leadership, discipline and growth.”

For years, Zara competed in smaller local pageants. Bigger stages felt intimidating. “I was scared I wouldn’t measure up,” she admits. “It felt safer to stay where I was comfortable.” That changed when she discovered Miss Teen Grand SA.

Zara watched past titleholders speak about important issues and carry themselves with confidence. “I saw that they were treated as young women with purpose,” she says. “It wasn’t just about winning. It was about impact.” In that moment, Zara decided to challenge herself. “I wanted to step onto a bigger stage, not for attention, but to test my courage.”

Competing in Miss Teen Grand SA became one of the most life-changing weeks of her life. Behind the gowns and bright lights, there were long nights and early mornings. “Some days I got home late and woke up at 5am to start again,” Zara says. “There were moments I doubted myself.”

The pressure was real, but so was the growth. “I learned to stay calm under scrutiny,” she explains. “I learned to trust the preparation I had done.” By the end of the competition, Zara realised the biggest prize was not the title. “It taught me discipline and integrity,” she says. “It showed me how strong I can be.”

When her name was finally announced as the winner of Miss Teen Grand SA, everything felt still. “I was overwhelmed,” Zara recalls. “I felt shock, happiness, gratitude and pride all at once. I couldn’t stop the tears.”

In that moment, Zara thought about the journey from the shy child to the confident young woman on stage. “I remembered the sacrifices my family made and the times I wanted to quit,” she says. “I felt proud that I didn’t give up.” She also understood the responsibility that came with the crown. “I realised I am now a role model. It’s not just an achievement. It’s a duty.”

Body positivity and empowering young girls are causes close to Zara’s heart. “I know how it feels to doubt yourself,” she says. “I want to be the person I once needed.” During her reign, Zara makes time to respond to messages from young girls. “Even a simple reply can change someone’s day,” she says. “I want them to know they are enough.”

Since winning, life has become busier and more structured. Zara balances school, family, friendships and public appearances with careful planning. “Balance doesn’t mean doing everything perfectly,” she says. “It means being present in every role.” She is also preparing for further studies in Portugal while representing South Africa internationally. “It requires discipline and organisation, but it has helped me grow,” she explains.

Through it all, one person stands out as her biggest supporter: her mother. “She has been my guide and my anchor,” Zara says. “She helped me walk in heels and she helped me believe in myself.” Zara adds that her entire family shares in the victory. “This crown belongs to them too.”

Looking ahead, Zara’s dreams stretch beyond the pageant stage. She plans to continue her education in Portugal and hopes to compete internationally in the future. “I want to blend my South African roots with global opportunities,” she says. More than titles, she wants impact. “I want to inspire girls to step out of their comfort zones and believe in their worth.”

The greatest lesson Zara has learned is simple but powerful. “Your voice matters,” she says firmly. “You don’t have to change who you are to fit in.” From a quiet child who avoided attention to a confident young woman leading with purpose, Zara’s journey is proof that growth begins with one brave step. “Take the first step, even if you feel unready,” she says. “Confidence is built through action. Dream boldly and trust yourself.”

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@combomasterfitness

# PETER CHANDA
## COMBOMASTER FITNESS

**From chasing size in the gym to leading bodybuilding across Africa, Peter has turned personal transformation into a mission to build stronger bodies, disciplined minds and lasting opportunities for others.**

When Peter first stepped into the gym, he was not trying to lose weight. He was trying to gain it. “I was lean, and I desired a stronger, fuller, more powerful body,” Peter says. “I did not just want size. I wanted structure, presence, and confidence.”

**Unlike many bodybuilding journeys, Peter’s story began with the challenge of building mass the right way. At first, he thought it would be simple. “I believed I just needed to eat more,” he admits. “But I quickly learned that building quality muscle requires discipline, knowledge, and consistency.” Every meal became intentional. Every workout had a purpose. The gym became his classroom, where he learned about progressive overload, nutrition, recovery and patience.**

There were moments when progress felt slow. “There were times when the scale did not move and doubt tried to creep in,” Peter says. “But I stayed consistent. I trusted the process.” Over time, his shoulders broadened, his chest filled out and his legs grew stronger. More importantly, his confidence grew. “I was no longer training just to gain weight. I was training to build a disciplined, focused and mentally strong version of myself.”

As his body changed, people began asking for advice. That is when Peter realised his journey was bigger than himself. He invested in education, enrolling at Trifocus Fitness Academy, where he earned a Certificate in Fitness and Psychology. He later completed a Diploma in Fitness with distinction through Furbulous University and obtained CPR certification with the American Heart Association. To deepen his nutrition knowledge, he studied with the Centre of Excellence, graduating with distinction in Nutrition.

Armed with knowledge and experience, Peter became a qualified fitness coach and began helping others transform safely and professionally. Through his work with the World Fitness Federation Zambia, he has guided athletes who want to gain weight properly through structured training, nutrition and mindset.

“The principle is the same whether you want to lose or gain weight,” Peter says. “Consistency. Discipline. Patience.” His early competitive years around 2009, representing Chawama Community Gym, were not easy. Facilities were basic. Equipment was limited. Nutrition was a struggle. “We relied on simple local foods and learned through trial and error,” Peter recalls. Sponsorships were rare, and athletes often funded themselves. “Those challenges built my mindset. Champions are not made by facilities. They are made by mindset.”

From local stages in Zambia, Peter went on to compete internationally in Zimbabwe, South Africa, Thailand and Indonesia. One of his most defining moments came at the 2022 WFF Universe in Bangkok. He placed fourth. “For many athletes, that would feel like a loss,” he says.

“But that competition became the greatest turning point of my life.” It was there that he was appointed President of the World Fitness Federation Zambia. “Sometimes your greatest achievement is not a medal, but the responsibility you are given to lead.”

Later that year in Lombok, Indonesia, Peter earned second place at the World Championship and completed an international judging course, becoming one of the few certified international bodybuilding judges from Zambia. “Bangkok gave me leadership. Lombok gave me technical authority,” he says. “Together, they gave me my mission.”

Reserved

# Interview with Peter Chanda

## Building Strength Leading African Fitness

Later that year in Lombok, Indonesia, Peter earned second place at the World Championship and completed an international judging course, becoming one of the few certified international bodybuilding judges from Zambia. “Bangkok gave me leadership. Lombok gave me technical authority,” he says. “Together, they gave me my mission.”

**As President, Peter focuses on service. He works to build structured competitions, educate athletes and promote natural bodybuilding. Beyond Zambia, he also serves on executive structures within World Fitness Federation International and World Fitness Federation Africa.**

“The most rewarding part is seeing African athletes step onto world stages with confidence and proper preparation,” he says. Peter’s personal brand, ComboMaster Fitness, grew from his belief that results come from combining training, nutrition and mindset. “‘Combo’ represents integration,” he explains. “‘Master’ represents responsibility and excellence.” His programmes are known for what he calls “cooking out body fat”. “It is about structured, progressive training and smart nutrition,” Peter says. “Transformation takes time and the right ingredients.”

He believes the biggest mistake beginners make is expecting instant results. “Fitness is not a short-term project. It is a lifestyle,” he says. He teaches clients to focus on routine rather than motivation, to set small goals and to understand their deeper purpose. “Motivation sparks action, but discipline builds results.”

Peter recalls two clients who began at 135kg and worked down to 87kg through structured plans and accountability. “It was not just about fat loss,” he says. “It was about regaining confidence and control.”

Today, his week balances personal training, client sessions and federation duties. Early mornings are reserved for his own workouts. Midday is dedicated to clients. Afternoons and evenings are filled with meetings, planning competitions and mentoring athletes. “Every role is connected,” he says. “My training keeps me credible. Coaching inspires me. Federation work expands opportunities.”

Looking ahead, Peter’s vision is clear. He wants fitness to become a lifestyle across Zambia and Africa. He aims to professionalise the sport, educate coaches and create pathways for young athletes. “I was once an athlete searching for a platform,” he says. “Today, I am building platforms for others.”

When asked about legacy, Peter pauses. “My legacy will not be measured by trophies,” he says. “It will be measured by lives transformed, leaders developed and a fitness culture elevated across Africa.”

Readers who would like to train with Peter, book coaching sessions or follow his fitness journey can connect with him on Instagram at @combomasterfitness, on TikTok at @combomasterfitness, and on Facebook at @peter.chanda.combomasterfitness, where he shares transformation stories, training tips and updates on his work in bodybuilding and athlete development.

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# Leilani Ludick

**PPMC MAGAZINE ISSUE 168**

*Captured Moments, Naturally*

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#Phata

# Interview with Leilani Ludick

## Owner of LL Photography

Leilani still remembers walking around as a child with a camera in her hand, chasing moments that others did not even notice. Long before LL Photography became a registered brand in 2020, she was the girl who insisted on taking photos at every family gathering. “Since childhood I loved to take pictures of family, friends and of nature,” Leilani says. “I loved to take those unexpected photos of family and friends, which always show the true image and not a fake smile.”

**For Leilani, photography was never just about posing people in front of a lens. It was about honesty. While other children were busy playing, she was often framing sunsets, flowers, and laughing cousins. She says her passion was clear from the start. “Since childhood I had a passion for it,” she explains simply.**

Although she had always loved photography, things became more serious in 2015. That was when she decided to invest more time and energy into developing her skills. She practised constantly, experimented with angles, and learned more about lighting and composition.

Five years later, in 2020, LL Photography was officially born. What started as a love for candid family pictures grew into a business built on heart and hard work. Leilani describes her photography style in two words: “All natural.” She prefers authenticity over heavy setups and artificial lighting. “I don’t like using flashes or umbrella lights,” she says. Instead, she works with available light, whether it is the soft glow of early morning or the golden tones of sunset. Her images reflect her personality — calm, real, and warm.

When it comes to favourite subjects, Leilani enjoys working with people the most. “I enjoy taking portraits, family, matric farewell and maternity shoots,” she says. These milestones matter to her because they capture important seasons in people’s lives. But she is quick to add that nature still holds a special place in her heart. “Don’t forget about nature as well, a sunrise and sunset is just as beautiful,” she says. For her, beauty is everywhere if you take the time to look.

One of her most memorable shoots was a matric farewell session for Gehard Fasching and Danielle Jooste. Leilani laughs as she remembers it. “They were smiling from ear to ear and to get a straight face out of them was an experience and a half,” she says. The excitement and nerves of the evening created moments that were both emotional and playful. “All the excitement and nerves played a big role,” she adds. Those are the kinds of sessions she loves most — full of real emotion.

Preparation is important to Leilani. She does not arrive at a venue without a plan. “I Google the venue and make sure to arrive early to do a walk through, to see where I can take the nicest photos,” she explains. By scouting locations beforehand, she ensures that she can focus fully on her clients during the shoot.

Her biggest inspiration comes from the people closest to her. “Mostly family and friends that commented on the photos I’ve taken and of course my mom and dad that inspired me to take it further,” she says. Their encouragement gave her the confidence to turn a hobby into a brand. Like many photographers, Leilani has faced challenges. Technology has changed the industry. “As we know, nowadays phones are so technologically advanced that the type of photos taken by your phone can almost do the same as your digital camera,” she explains.

Competition is also strong. “There are so many photographers out there, which cause you to really work hard to build your client base.” Her solution is simple: build strong relationships. “Build a good rapport with your existing clients, have specials and one will get through it.”

**Creating a relaxed atmosphere during a shoot is one of her strengths. “Get to know them first, mingle a bit, make a joke or two,” she says. She often reassures nervous clients with the same advice: “Don’t be afraid of the camera, smile, relax and be yourself.” That comfort shows in her photos.**

To stay informed, Leilani follows well-known photographers and subscribes to newsletters from Nikon and Canon. She believes learning never stops. For aspiring photographers, her message is clear. “If you have a passion for photography, go for it!” she says. Then she adds words that reflect her heart for the craft: “Photos are the only memories that you can give. Once that moment or person is gone, it’s all that we have at the end.”

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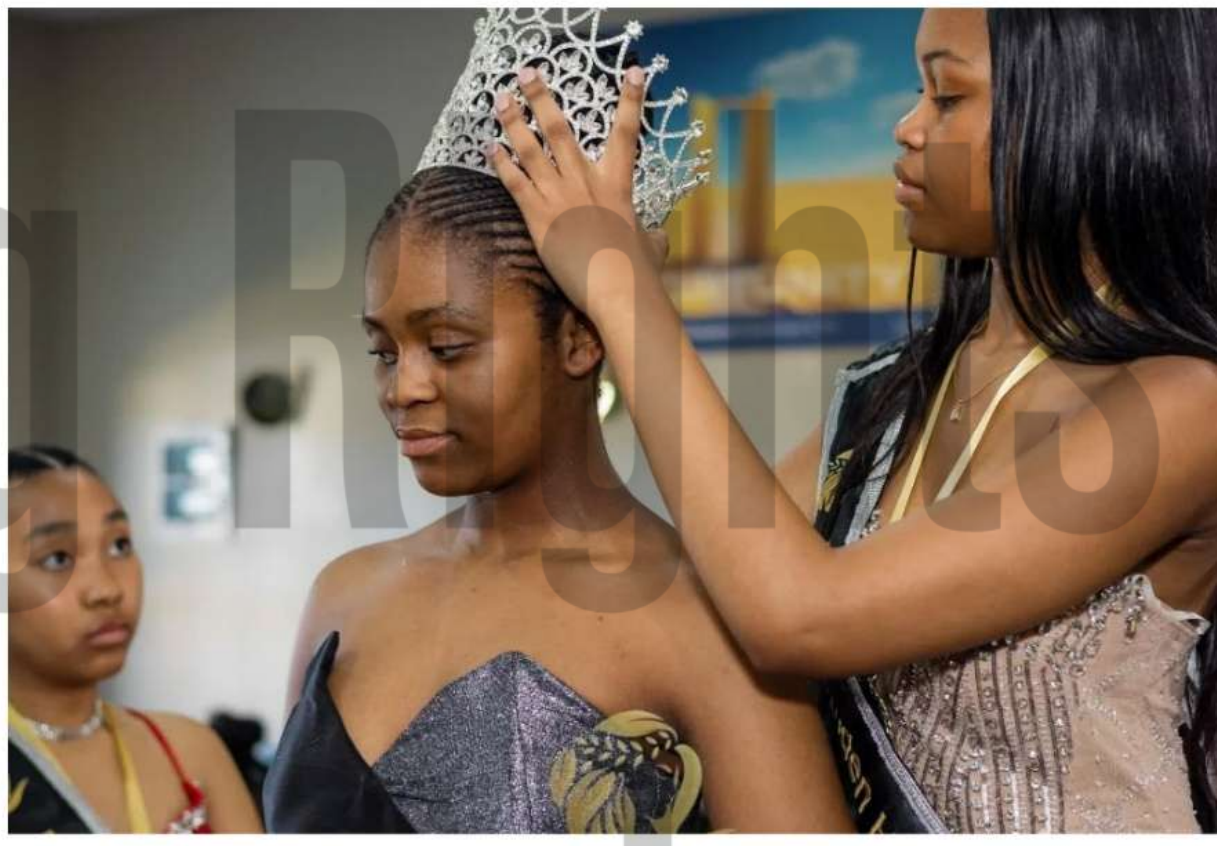
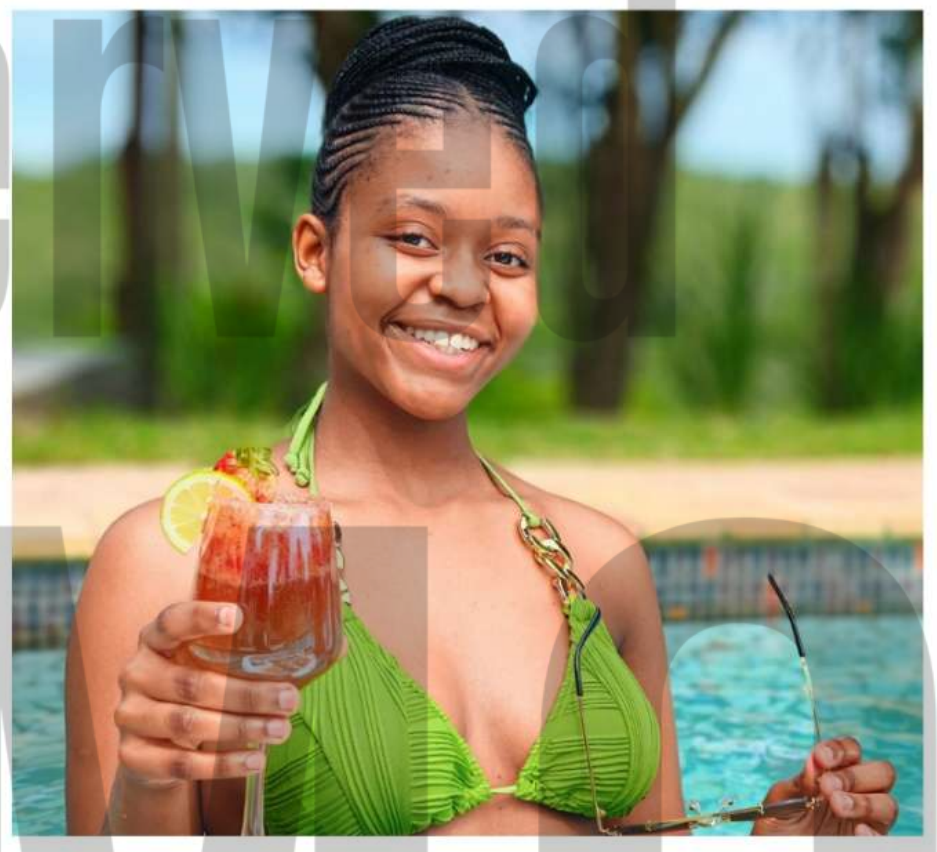
# ILUNGILE MVIMBI

## Miss Golden Heart South Africa 2025/26





Fifteen-year-old Ilungile, a Grade 10 learner from rural Bizana in South Africa's Eastern Cape, has been crowned Miss Golden Heart South Africa 2025/26 and is using her title to champion mental health awareness, proving that purpose, confidence, and big dreams have no age limit.

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#Pageant

# Interview with Ilungile Mvimbi

## Miss Golden Heart South Africa 2025/26

**At just 15 years old, Ilungile is already walking in purpose. When her name was announced as Miss Golden Heart South Africa 2025/26, she says the moment felt almost unreal. “When my name was announced as the winner, it felt like a rush of adrenaline mixed with disbelief as well as joy,” Ilungile says. “I could not believe that it was really me.”**

**Ilungile’s journey into pageantry started long before she ever stepped onto a stage as a contestant. Growing up in Bizana in the Eastern Cape, she often attended local pageants as a spectator. She would sit in the audience, watching the contestants with admiration. “I used to attend pageant competitions in my hometown as a spectator and I later realised that I, myself, would love to be a pageant model,” she explains. That quiet dream slowly grew into a goal, and entering Miss Golden Heart became the next bold step.**

**Ilungile credits her community in Bizana for helping shape the young woman she is today. “My community has helped in shaping me into what I am by providing emotional, physical and financial support at all times,” she says. Growing up in a rural area taught her humility, gratitude and the value of standing together. She says the encouragement from home gave her the confidence to compete on a national stage.**

**Now a Grade 10 learner at Port Shepstone High School, Ilungile has to juggle books and beauty with discipline. Balancing schoolwork and pageant preparation is not always easy, but she has found a system that works for her. “I balance schoolwork with pageant training and preparations by completing all delegated school work in the school library so that I have time to focus on pageant training and preparations in the afternoons and weekends,” she says. Planning ahead and staying organised helps her keep her grades strong while chasing her dreams.**

**Beyond the crown and sash, Ilungile stands firmly for mental health awareness. It is a cause that is deeply personal. “Mental health is important to me because it is very important and it affects our lives in many different ways but people do not have enough knowledge about it,” she says. She speaks openly about her own struggles. “As a person who always suffered from self-doubt and self-sabotage, and is now educated about the importance of mental health prioritisation, I saw it best to advocate for mental health.”**

**Her message to young people across South Africa is clear and heartfelt. “I want young people in South Africa to understand that it’s okay not to be okay and asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness,” Ilungile says. She believes that too many teenagers suffer in silence because they fear judgment or misunderstanding.**

**Ilungile plans to use her Miss Golden Heart South Africa title with intention. “I plan to use my Miss Golden Heart South Africa title to spread awareness about mental health through hosting webinars and speaking at events about the importance of mental health,” she explains. She hopes to visit schools, speak at community gatherings and use social media platforms to reach as many young people as possible.**

**While the crowning moment stands out as the most exciting part of her journey so far, it did not come without challenges. “The most exciting part of my journey is the moment of being crowned Miss Golden Heart South Africa,” she says with a smile. But she admits that the road to that stage tested her confidence.**

**“The hardest part for me was socialising with people through asking for votes and support, as well as having to speak at public events with a large number of people,” Ilungile shares. To overcome this fear, she practised tirelessly. “I overcame it by practicing public speaking at home, church and at school by reading books aloud to boost my speaking ability and confidence.”**

**Winning the title has changed the way Ilungile sees herself. “Winning this title made me have big dreams and aspirations as I now believe in myself, which I didn’t before,” she says honestly. The crown did more than recognise her beauty; it strengthened her belief in her own worth.**

**On stage, Ilungile feels alive. “I enjoy every part of being on stage as I get to challenge myself as well as express myself and my personality through what I love the most – modeling,” she says. Whether it is the interview segment, evening wear or simply connecting with the audience, she embraces every second.**

**Looking ahead, Ilungile’s dreams stretch far beyond her reign. “I plan to be a powerful mental health advocate and a modeling coach,” she says. She also wants to give back. “I also plan to join charity events, being involved in giving back to all supportive communities.” Her vision is not only about personal success, but about lifting others along the way.**

**For young girls in rural areas like Bizana who may feel nervous about chasing their dreams, Ilungile offers simple but strong advice. “A dream is always there to be fulfilled. Their age or background should never be a barrier to them achieving their dreams,” she says. “The future is ours to create and we should start now.” With her crown in place and her voice growing stronger, Ilungile is proving that purpose has no age limit.**

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Founder and CEO
of Honobroke
Motion Vision

SIVIWE
HONOBROKE
MASHIY

#Film

# Meet Siviwe Honobroke Mashiy

## Dreams, Vision, Music and Film

A story by:
Etaiya Briscoe

Siviwe Honobroke Mashiy is a self-taught filmmaker, writer, and music producer whose career spans nearly two decades. “I am a self-taught and self-made individual through written material,” Siviwe says. “It all started in 2004 when I wrote my first script. That eventually led to my first self-published book in 2013, and in the same year, I produced my first short film.”

From there, his creative journey expanded into music production, which led to his first album in 2015. By 2017, Siviwe was scouting and photographing aspiring models, adding another layer to his artistic repertoire. “In 2021, I decided I was done training myself, so I shot three short films: Dream, Journey and Passion, Compassion, Love and Grace, and Passion, Love and Soulmate,” he explains.

His first feature film, Dream, Determination and Vision, premiered in 2022, followed by Theory, Love and Journey in the same year, and in 2023, he released Brotherhood, Trust and Honor. Beyond films, Siviwe has created documentaries, talk show episodes, music videos, and continues to publish books every year.

**When asked what inspired him to enter filmmaking, Siviwe is clear: “It is more that film chose me because my screenplays come in dreams. My first screenplay actually came in a dream, and I am yet to shoot it.”**

Filmmaking is notoriously demanding, but Siviwe says his motivation comes from the visions he has for each project. “Self-motivation through the visions and dreams I have for each project keeps me going. I get excited just talking about them.” Patience, he adds, is key.

“A lot of patience and understanding is required because there are circumstances out of your control. You may need to postpone, reschedule, or reshoot.”

He encourages aspiring filmmakers to take the plunge. “It doesn’t matter how you start, just start and always start small,” he says. Siviwe also emphasizes staying true to your vision. “Stay true to the vision you have, never try to be someone you’re not, and embrace your unique voice. You have a story to tell, so tell it.”

Handling challenges on set is part of the job. “When an actor isn’t professional, I take them aside and address it privately,” Siviwe explains. He draws inspiration from some of the greats in filmmaking, citing Tyler Perry, Clint Eastwood, and Steven Spielberg as his influences.

**Looking ahead, Siviwe is focusing on music, planning his seventh album this year. Reflecting on past challenges, he notes, “The challenge was finishing the films, especially when everyone dropped me during the shooting. But the vision I have while writing a screenplay keeps me going.”**

Siviwe also shares who he would love to work with and why. “I’d love to work with Lalla Hirayama. I envision her as one of the girlfriends of the main five guys in a film. And Denzel Washington, the way he commands presence on screen, is inspiring.”

**While he enjoys live-action films, he has his sights set on animation. “I design my own original characters, so I’d like to get into animation in the future.” Post-production can be tricky too. “During editing, my laptop would crash, which is the most difficult problem I’ve faced,” he admits.**

Siviwe works closely with his actors to bring out their best performances. “I motivate them to be themselves in the character, which is why I chose them,” he says. He also hopes to see changes in the industry. “I’d like to see equal payment for male and female actors, better access to funding, and more independent streaming platforms to reach wider audiences.”

He reflects on what drives him. “It’s always about executing the vision I have for a specific project. No one really influenced me within the industry. I had to gather my own strength and believe in myself.” If he had an unlimited budget, Siviwe reveals, he would produce the feature he wrote in 2005, which has a theme similar to Fast and Furious.

Of all his achievements, he is proud of developing his skills through each project. His most recent film, Crime, Justice and Honor, explores the crime genre and his own philosophy. “It was an idea of exploring crime from the perspective of a gentle soul who chooses peace over violence,” he says.

He also points out the challenges women face in the industry. “From what I’ve seen, women are not always taken seriously. There aren’t enough leading roles, and pay is not equal,” he explains.

Siviwe Honobroke Mashiy’s career is a testament to passion, vision, and persistence. From scripts born in dreams to films, music, and books, he continues to carve his own path, encouraging others to start small, stay true, and always follow their creative instincts.

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# Gerhard Meiring *Photography*

## *Socials*

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#Phata

# Introducing Gerhard Meiring-Britz

## Capturing Confidence Through Dramatic Light

Gerhard Meiring-Britz did not plan a long speech about becoming a photographer. For Gerhard, it started in the most natural way. “I am a fashion designer as well,” Gerhard explains. “Most of my friends were models, so photography became a natural extension of my creativity and my passion for beauty.” With no big launch or business plan, Gerhard simply bought a camera. “I literally just bought myself a camera, started shooting with friends and anyone willing enough to trust me, and the rest is history.”

Photography quickly became more than just a side project. Gerhard found joy in creating images that speak for themselves. “I enjoy creating beautiful, striking images,” Gerhard says. “I love that extension of my creative eye, sometimes completely removed from fashion.” While fashion remains part of Gerhard’s world, photography allows space to explore something different, something more personal.

Gerhard specialises in what he calls confidence shoots. These sessions are about more than just good lighting and flattering angles. “Whether it is a beautiful lady who has worked hard to change her life, or a guy who gyms seven days a week, I try to capture someone’s hard work and the confidence that goes along with perseverance and hard work,” Gerhard explains. The goal is simple: show people what they might not always see in themselves. Gerhard also loves building model portfolios. “I LOVE model portfolios and helping new faces get discovered. I enjoy teaching them how to work in front of a camera.”

When asked to describe a personal style, Gerhard does not hesitate. “I am absolutely in love with very dramatic lighting when it comes to studio work,” Gerhard says. There is sometimes a slightly suggestive edge, but it is always done with taste. “It is always classy and striking.” On location, the approach is different. “When it comes to shooting on location, I shoot how I feel. Sometimes just starting to shoot sets the tone for where I go with a session.” One of Gerhard’s most memorable moments came early in the journey. “A few years ago, being a relative newbie, I was asked to do the publicity shots for a huge soapie on kykNET,” Gerhard recalls. It was a long day, but one that left a mark. “It was some of the best 12 hours, working with some of the biggest acting names in the Afrikaans acting fraternity.” For someone still finding a place in the industry, it was a proud moment.

Preparation for a shoot might surprise some people. Gerhard prefers not to overplan. “I honestly don’t like to prepare too much, because sometimes you get disappointed when it does not work out,” Gerhard says. “I like to fly with the punches and see what we can capture.” That flexibility allows space for magic to happen naturally.

Inspiration does not come from one single person. “I cannot say that I have been influenced by a single person,” Gerhard explains. “I draw inspiration from various points of view.” Having strong friendships in the industry also helps. “I am lucky enough to have amazing photographer friends. They have been incredible muses and inspirations in my career.”

Like many creatives, Gerhard has faced financial pressure. “Photography is not a cheap career,” Gerhard admits. Equipment, studio time and travel all add up. Still, the belief in hard work keeps things moving. “Hard work ends up reaping rewards,” Gerhard says simply.

Making clients feel comfortable is one of the most important parts of the job. “I honestly like to connect,” Gerhard says. Communication before a shoot helps build trust. If that is not possible, extra time is added. “Have a chat or a laugh together, because uncomfortable really shows badly in an image.” For Gerhard, the connection behind the camera matters just as much as the final photo. One unexpected memory still brings a smile. “I had a client fly all the way from Johannesburg for a day,” Gerhard shares. Within half an hour of picking him up at the airport, the client was already in front of the camera. “We spent an entire day shooting all over Port Elizabeth. I remember that day with a smile.” Even better, the friendship lasted. “We are still friends today, almost 10 years later.”

To stay current, Gerhard keeps an eye on social media. “My feeds always show me amazing stuff I may admire, or sometimes try for myself,” Gerhard says. Trends change fast, but curiosity keeps creativity fresh. For aspiring photographers, the advice is direct. “Just do it,” Gerhard says. “Start shooting as often as you can. You will mess up, but that is how you learn and grow.” There is no shortcut, only practice and persistence.

Balancing business and creativity requires discipline. “You have to keep a finger on both,” Gerhard explains. Finances are handled upfront to avoid stress later. “I prefer to have the financial stuff sorted before a shoot. It makes it easier for everyone involved.” As for 2026, Gerhard smiles and stays mysterious. “That would be telling you too much,” Gerhard says. “Keep an eye on my social media pages and enjoy.”

Looking ahead, the vision is clear. “Focusing more and more on growing every day,” Gerhard says. The mission remains the same: create content that feels honest and powerful. “I want to shoot content I love and that makes clients see that they are worthy, appreciated and amazing.”.

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# Mphotsentle Boikanyo

**PPMC MAGAZINE ISSUE 168**

*Fearless Queen With A Purpose*

#Pageant

# Introducing Mphotsentle Boikanyo

## Miss Unique & Preteen Kgatleng Queen 2025/26

When Mphotsentle's name was announced as Miss Unique and Preteen Kgatleng Queen 2025–2026, it was a moment she will never forget. The young queen still lights up when she speaks about that day. "I was over the moon!" Mphotsentle says with a bright smile. "It was an incredibly fantastic day for me. It was a dream come true."

For Mphotsentle, pageantry is more than crowns and sashes. It is about growth, courage, and stepping into her power. She admits that one of her favorite parts of competing is standing in front of a crowd. "What I love most about being on stage is the cheers from the crowd," she explains. "But the highlight for me is when the judges ask me a question. It's a moment that really tests my knowledge."

It is clear that Mphotsentle sees pageants as a platform to show both confidence and intelligence. She carries herself with calm self-belief, something she says comes from deep within. "I've got the confidence to take on the world, and it comes from within," she says. "I motivate myself to be fearless."

That inner strength is supported by a strong family foundation. Mphotsentle speaks with deep gratitude about her mother, who plays a major role in her journey. "The person who inspires me most is my mum," she shares. "She's always there for me, supporting me and going the extra mile for my modeling career."

Her sister is also one of her biggest cheerleaders. Together, her mom and sister encouraged her to step into the modeling world. "They always remind me that it's about working with both beauty and brains," Mphotsentle says. It is advice she clearly takes seriously.

Although she has already collected several titles, Mphotsentle remembers exactly where it all began. "I've won several titles, but my fave is Little Miss Regal," she says proudly. "It was my very first pageant win!" That first victory gave her confidence and showed her what she was capable of achieving. Winning Miss Unique and Preteen Kgatleng was another special milestone. "Winning Miss Unique and Preteen Kgatleng was extra special because it was the first time I walked away with prize money, which was R1000," she says excitedly. For Mphotsentle, it was not just about the money, but about the recognition of her hard work.

To Mphotsentle, being a queen carries responsibility. "Being a queen is about leadership, setting a good example, and motivating others," she explains. "It's about inspiring people, building their confidence, and empowering them to own the stage, even when they're feeling unsure or facing bullies."

Her heart is especially set on promoting self-love. "Everyone is beautiful in their own way. It's about working with what you've got," she says firmly. "Being fat or having certain features doesn't define your worth. We are all uniquely created, and that's what makes us beautiful. Own it, you're beautiful just the way you are!"

**Mphotsentle's compassion goes even further. She dreams of creating a pageant specifically for people living with disabilities. "I'm passionate about starting a pageant for people living with disabilities," she says. "It's about time we showcase that pageants are for everyone. Beauty comes in all forms, and everyone deserves a chance to shine."**

One of the people who inspired this dream is Mia Le Roux. Mphotsentle admires her deeply. "Mia is a huge inspiration. She proved that living with a disability doesn't hold you back," she says. "Her participation in Miss South Africa shows that your circumstances don't define you." Despite her busy schedule, Mphotsentle still makes time to enjoy being a child. "When I'm not modeling or competing, I love chilling with friends, getting lost in a good book, or vibing to some music," she says. These simple joys help her relax and stay balanced.

Education remains her top priority. "I prioritize my schoolwork. Books come first, school comes first, and then I fit in modeling around it," she explains. It is a discipline that will serve her well, especially since she has big plans for her future.

One day, Mphotsentle hopes to become a GP doctor. "Helping people makes me happy, and I hate seeing others suffer, so I think it'll be a perfect fit," she says sincerely. Her caring nature shines through as she speaks about wanting to make a difference in people's lives.

When asked what message she would share with other young children who dream of becoming queens, Mphotsentle does not hesitate. "Be fearless!" she says confidently. "Don't be afraid to chase your dreams and do what makes you happy. Be your own motivator, be your own boss, and own your life. You got this! Go out there and conquer the world. You deserve it."

With her crown in place, her heart set on helping others, and her confidence rooted firmly within, Mphotsentle is not just wearing a title. She is living it.

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#Model

# Interview with Marc Dampies

## Look In Lens 2026 Finalist

A story by:
**Etaiya Briscoe**

At just 20 years old, Marc is already building a name for himself in the world of pageantry and modeling. Born in Mitchell's Plain and now living in Greater Chatsworth, Marc carries his journey with pride. "I was born in Mitchell's Plain and moved to Greater Chatsworth when I was 14," Marc says. "I've been here ever since, and this is home."

Life has not always been easy, but Marc has chosen to focus on growth rather than obstacles. "Despite facing challenges, I kept going," he explains. "Those experiences helped shape me and pushed me to find what I love." That love turned out to be modeling. Being in front of the camera gives Marc a sense of purpose. "I enjoy modeling and expressing myself through it. It's where I feel confident and motivated," he says.

**Marc is currently competing in the Look In Lens competition and proudly holds the titles of Mr Swartland 2025 and Pride Personality. He sees these achievements not as trophies, but as stepping stones. "These titles mean responsibility," Marc says. "They remind me that I represent more than just myself."**

Family plays an important role in Marc's life. He has two brothers whom he speaks about with warmth. "I love my brothers dearly," he says. "They are part of my support system, and I want to make them proud." His drive extends beyond the runway. Marc has his eyes set on business as well. "I want to become a successful young entrepreneur," he shares. "My goal is to start my own business within the next five years."

Fitness is another key part of his routine. Marc enjoys running and working out, not just for physical health but for mental clarity. "Running helps me clear my mind," he says. "Working out contributes to my overall happiness." When it comes to personal style, Marc keeps it bold and classic. "My favorite colors are red, black, and blue," he adds with a smile.

**Competing in pageants was a decision he made to challenge himself. "I entered to push myself and showcase my abilities," Marc explains. "I wanted to show that I'm versatile and committed." He believes pageantry has given him a platform to make a positive impact. "It's not just about looking good," he says. "It's about representing yourself with dignity and standing for something meaningful."**

Marc speaks openly about one of the biggest issues facing young people today: unemployment. "Many young people have qualifications but still can't find jobs," he says. "They struggle to provide for their families." He believes entrepreneurship could be part of the solution. "If we empower young people to start businesses, we can create more job opportunities and improve lives," Marc says firmly.

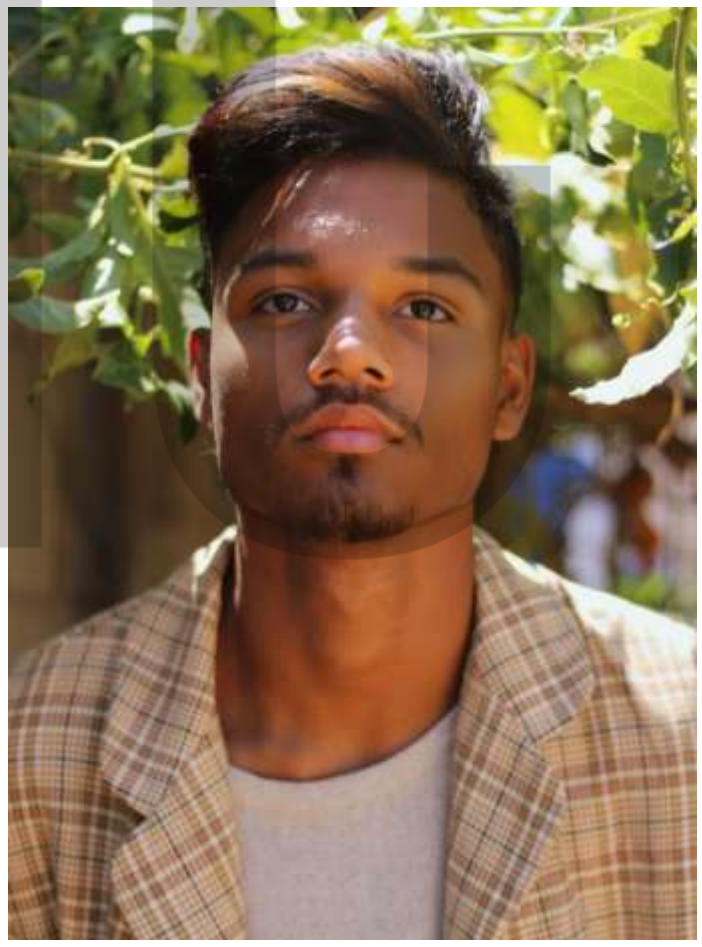
**While he values pageantry, Marc also sees its complexities. "Pageantry can be objectifying if it focuses only on physical appearance," he admits. "But it can also be a powerful platform where people show their abilities and character." For him, it is about balance and purpose.**

Marc's platform is closely linked to his passion for modeling. He wants to inspire others who may doubt themselves. "If I can inspire even one person to chase their dreams, that's enough," he says. Social media, in his view, is a tool that must be used wisely. "It has united people, but it has also isolated them," Marc reflects. "We need balance in how we connect." Like many young people, Marc admits to having fears. "My biggest fear is rejection," he says honestly. "But I'm learning to overcome it." He believes that what sets him apart is his determination. "I don't give up easily," Marc says.

"I stay focused on my goals." Staying positive is a daily choice. "I remind myself to make the most of each day," he says. "And I trust in a higher power to guide me." That mindset keeps him grounded as he dreams big. One of his biggest ambitions is to feature on the cover of Vogue. "That's a dream of mine," Marc says confidently. "I believe it's possible."

To aspiring models, Marc offers simple but strong advice. "Stay focused. Be strong. Embrace challenges as opportunities to grow," he says. He credits pageantry for teaching him confidence and poise. "It has helped me carry myself with pride and believe in who I am."

**For Marc, this journey is only the beginning. With clear goals, strong faith, and a desire to uplift others, he is walking his path with purpose.**



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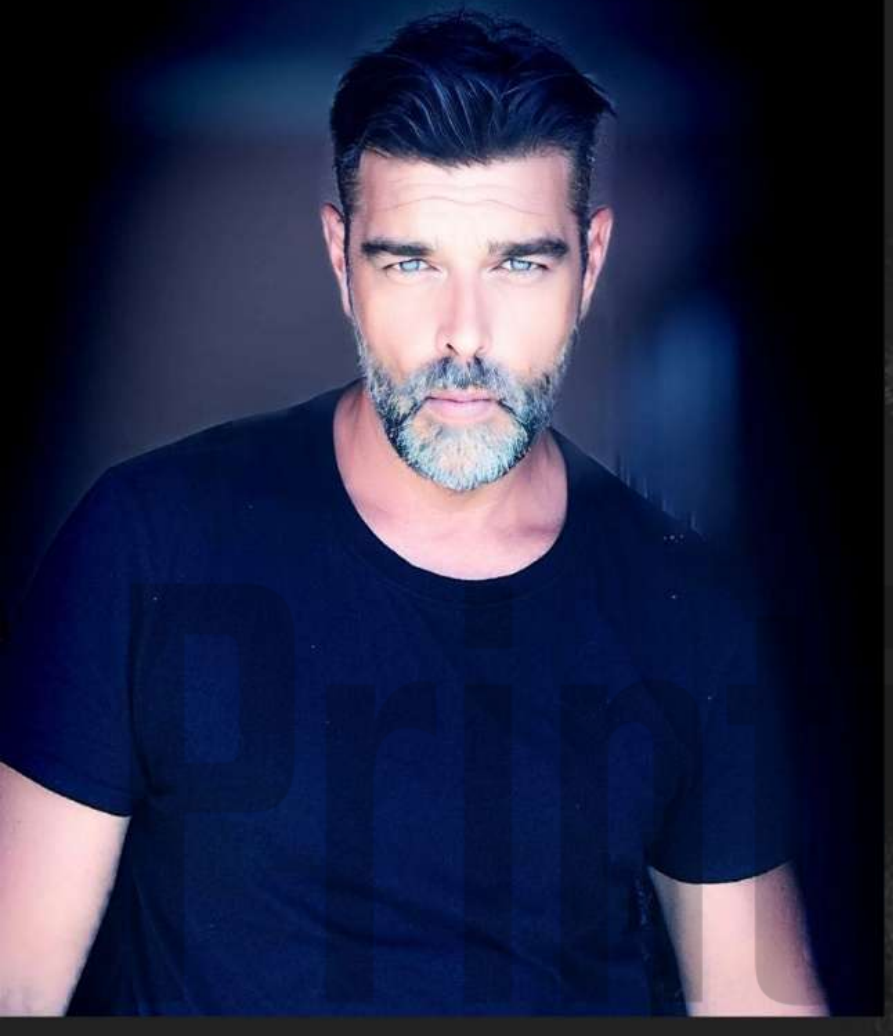
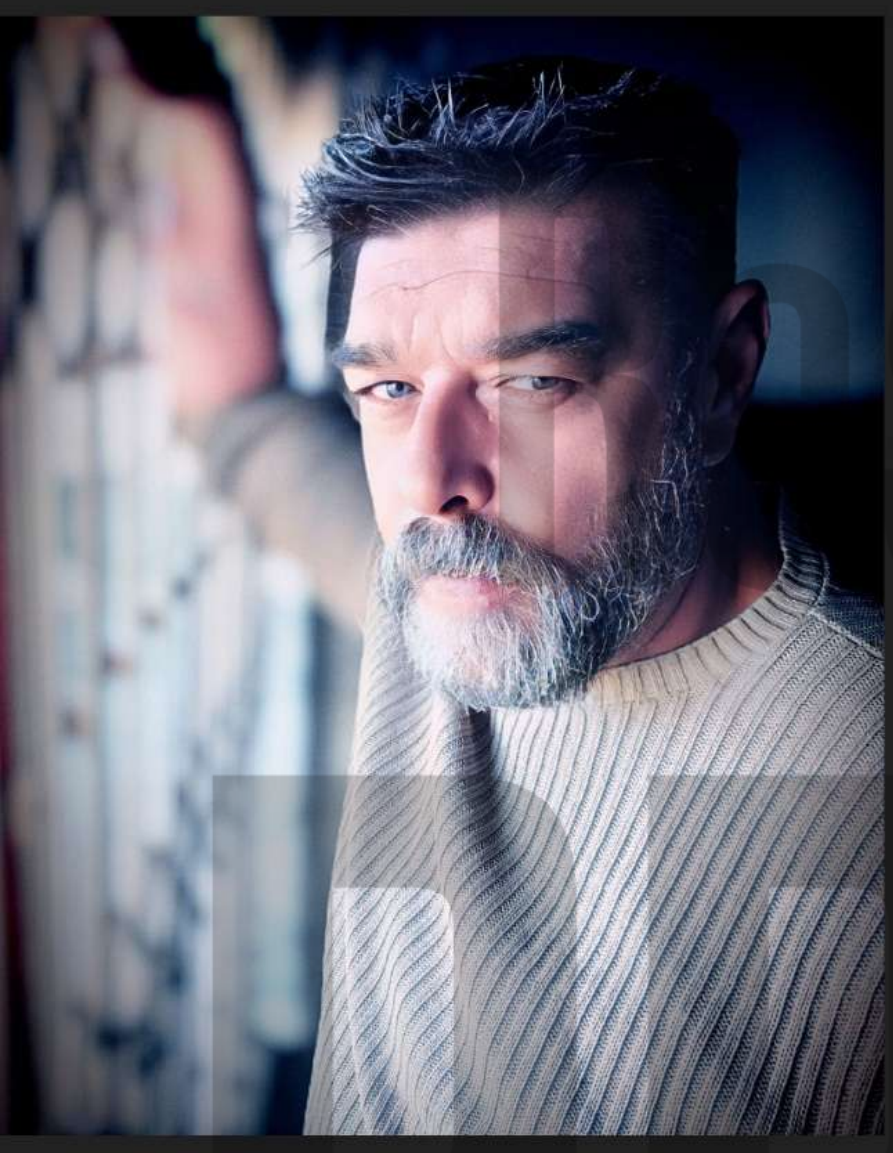
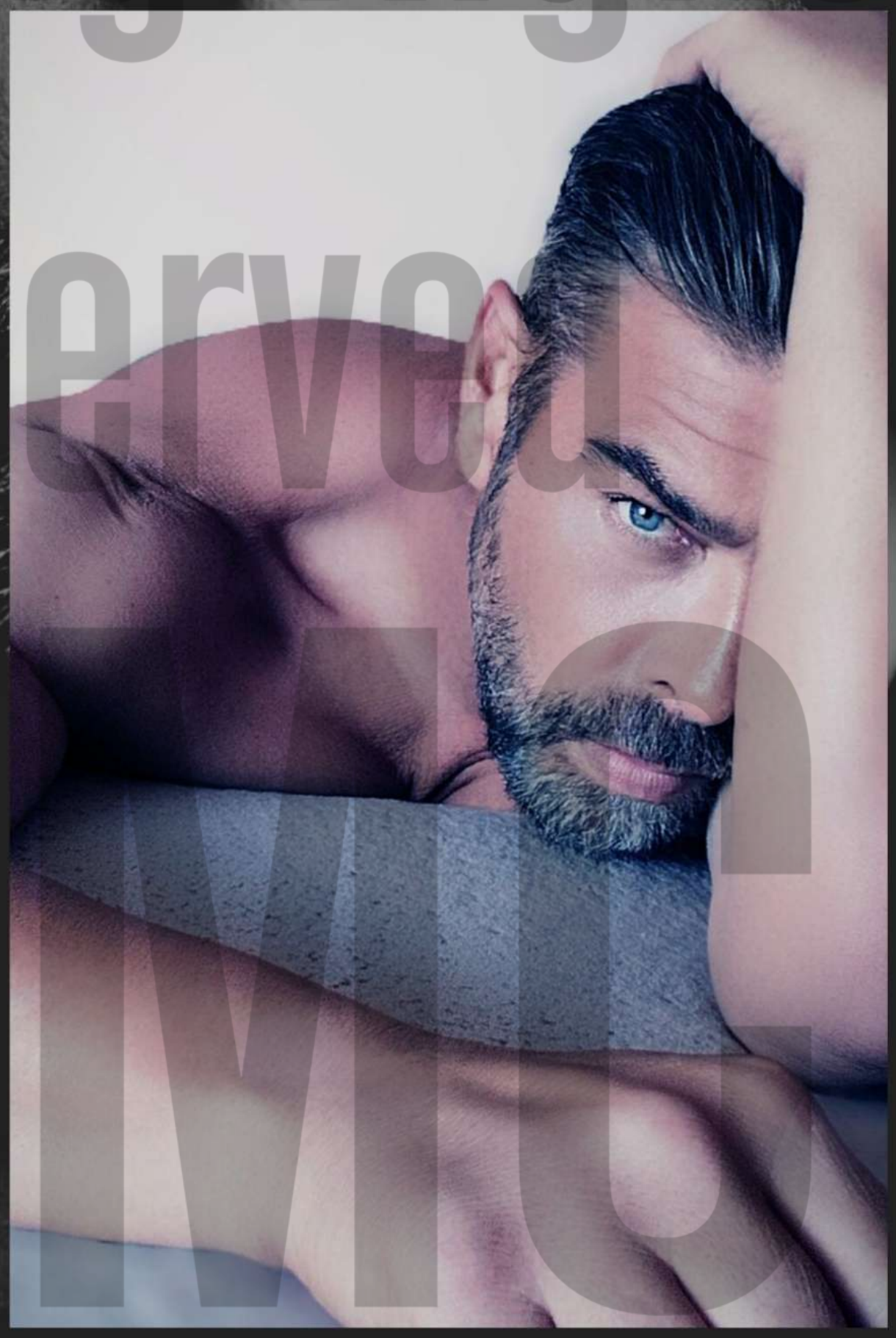


# Armand Cilliers





From a single bold chance taken on an ordinary day, Cape Town model Armand Cilliers has built a confident career in commercial modeling, turning raw passion into professional success with Blaze Talents.

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#Model

# Interview with Armand Cilliers

## Turning Raw Passion Into Success

Armand Cilliers never set out to become a model. One ordinary day he simply decided to give it a try. “I just took a chance and the right people started talking to me and from there I built connections,” Armand says. Today he is signed with Blaze Talents and works steadily as a freelance and commercial model in Cape Town and beyond.

**Armand quickly discovered that commercial modeling gave him something he had been missing. “I just found a way of expressing myself better through this type of modelling and I enjoy being challenged as I have a passion and love for it,” he explains. For Armand, the camera is not a stage to perform on but a space where he can simply be himself, only louder.**

His very first paid job still stands out. “The first job was an awesome feeling and I’ve gained a lot of experience and that is where I found my passion for this type of modelling,” Armand remembers with a smile. The nerves were there, but so was a rush of excitement that told him he had found his place. That single day taught him more than he expected and confirmed what he already felt inside: he was made for this.

What Armand loves most about the work is the freedom it gives him. “Self expression,” he says simply. “It comes naturally. I bring my own edge to add to the job to make it successful and definitely gain more experience with every opportunity I get.” Clients notice that extra spark. Whether it is a clothing catalogue, a product shoot or a lifestyle campaign, Armand arrives ready to add something fresh without ever forcing it.

Being a male model brings its own pressures, but Armand refuses to see them as problems. “I see every challenge as an opportunity to better myself than I was yesterday,” he says. He does not waste time complaining about fewer opportunities or tougher competition. Instead he focuses on what he can control.

Preparation is everything for Armand. Before any casting or shoot he spends time alone building the character he wants to show. “I create my own image in my head and I practice until I see progress and I’m happy with it,” he explains. “I always choose discipline over motivation and consistency over perfection.” He repeats poses in front of the mirror, adjusts his posture, and keeps going until the movements feel easy. That quiet work at home is what makes the job look effortless on set.

When asked about his most memorable shoot, Armand does not hesitate. “I would have to say it was the very first one, as I have learned a lot from it and that is where I have decided I am definitely made for this. I will forever be grateful for it.” Every job since then has built on that foundation, but nothing has matched the pure joy of the beginning.

Staying confident in a competitive industry takes work. Armand keeps a simple rule in his head. “Definitely a mindset, to go bigger and better with every opportunity that you get to grow and see every opportunity as a learning experience,” he says. He celebrates small wins and learns from every no. “I am definitely growing with every step. It definitely builds more confidence and it makes me stronger,” Armand adds.

The skills he has picked up reach far beyond the studio. “Adaptability, and professionalism,” he lists. “Beyond posing, commercial models develop a variety of skills. So I would say to combine all into it.” He has learned to read a room, take direction quickly, and stay calm under bright lights and tight deadlines. Those same qualities now help him in daily life.

Balancing modeling with everything else is not always easy, but Armand makes it look simple. “I think I can prioritise very well and balance between everything and I have the support from people that has the same passion as I have and that truly help a lot,” he says. His friends and family understand the late calls and early starts. Having people around him who share the same drive makes the juggling much easier.

If you ask Armand who has influenced his career the most, his answer is direct. “Myself, as I want to be better than I was yesterday.” He does not look to famous faces or big campaigns for motivation. His drive comes from within, from the quiet promise he makes to himself every morning.

To young men thinking about entering the industry, Armand offers clear words. “Don’t overthink it, just take a chance as life is too short.” He knows how easy it is to talk yourself out of something new. His own story proves that sometimes the only thing standing between you and your next step is the decision to try.

What sets Armand apart is something he carries with him every day. “I would have to say, my confidence,” he states without hesitation. It is not loud or showy. It is the steady belief that he belongs in front of the camera and that he has something worth showing.

Looking ahead, Armand is focused and excited. “I would have to say, to be the best. I will always believe in dreaming big and that I will get a lot more opportunities and jobs in this industry. I am very excited for what the future holds.” He is already working on his next big project outside of modeling. Armand is busy launching his first podcast, called Unfiltered Edge, which aims to enrich the lives of others through honest conversations.

For now, Armand keeps showing up, keeps practising, and keeps bringing that personal edge to every job. From the first nervous casting to the latest campaign, he has stayed true to the simple idea that started it all: take the chance. The rest, he says, will follow.

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# Kayleigh Kotze

Photo credits: Carel van Vuuren
Facebook: @kayleigh.kotze
TikTok: @kayleighkotze

**Kayleigh stood proudly on the international stage when she was announced as 2nd Runner-Up at the Miss Deaf International competition. For her, the moment meant far more than a crown and sash. "Placing as 2nd Runner-Up at Miss Deaf International meant more than a title to me," Kayleigh says.**

**"It was a powerful affirmation of representation and purpose." She explains that the achievement reflects years of personal growth and self-belief. "It showed that Deaf women belong on global stages, not as exceptions, but as leaders."**

**Kayleigh entered the competition with a clear mission. She wanted to challenge stereotypes and show that Deaf individuals are capable, confident, and strong. "I wanted to represent my country and my community with pride," she says. "I also wanted to be a voice for Deaf women who deserve visibility and equal opportunities." For Kayleigh, the pageant was not just about personal success. It was about opening doors for others.**

**One of her most unforgettable memories was standing alongside contestants from around the world. "The most memorable moment was being on stage with women from different countries who all shared the experience of being Deaf," she says. Despite cultural differences, they connected deeply. "We communicated through sign language, shared our stories, and understood one another. That sisterhood was something I will never forget."**

**Preparing for an international competition required mental and emotional strength. Kayleigh focused on building her confidence and staying connected to her purpose. "I practiced mindfulness and positive affirmations," she explains. "I stayed close to mentors, friends, and family who supported me." She often reminded herself that she was representing more than just her own dreams. "I was representing an entire community, and that gave me strength."**

**Like any major journey, there were challenges. Communication barriers and the pressure of representing her country weighed heavily at times. "One of the biggest challenges was navigating communication differences while performing at my best," Kayleigh admits. She chose to focus on solutions instead of obstacles. "I stayed calm under pressure and trusted my preparation. I reminded myself why I started."**

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#Pageant

# Interview with Kayleigh Kotze

## Miss Deaf International 2026 2nd Runner-up

**Being part of the Deaf community has shaped Kayleigh's identity in profound ways. "It has taught me creativity in communication and the importance of solidarity," she says. She speaks with pride about her culture and community. "My Deaf identity is not a limitation — it is my strength." That confidence carried her through every stage of the competition.**

For Kayleigh, the title represents something greater than personal recognition. "This sends a message that Deaf women are visible, capable, and deserving of global recognition," she says. Representation matters deeply to her. "When young Deaf girls see someone like them on an international stage, it expands what they believe is possible."

Kayleigh has a clear message for those young girls. "Your dreams are valid," she says firmly. "Your voices matter — whether through sign language, written words, or other forms of communication." She encourages them not to let society define their limits. "You are powerful exactly as you are."

She believes competitions like Miss Deaf International play an important role in changing perceptions. "These platforms challenge misconceptions and create visibility," Kayleigh explains. They also create opportunities for leadership and cultural exchange. "They show that beauty includes intelligence, strength, and purpose."

During the competition, Kayleigh discovered new strengths within herself. "I found a deeper level of determination and adaptability," she says. She learned she could stay composed under pressure and communicate confidently across cultures. "Being authentic was my greatest strength.

Staying true to myself made all the difference." Looking ahead, Kayleigh plans to use her platform to promote inclusion and accessibility. "I want to advocate for better access to education, employment, and media representation for Deaf individuals," she says.

She hopes to work with organizations to promote sign language awareness and create inclusive spaces where Deaf and hearing communities can connect meaningfully.

Kayleigh also dreams of broader societal change. "I would like to see equal access to leadership roles and professional opportunities without discrimination," she says. She believes Deaf women should be recognised for their skills and contributions, not judged by limitations.

**She encourages hearing communities to become active allies. "Learn basic sign language. Advocate for accessibility. Create inclusive environments," Kayleigh says. "True support begins with listening, respecting Deaf culture, and being open to learning."**

During her reign as 2nd Runner-Up, Kayleigh hopes to inspire and educate. She plans to mentor young Deaf girls and take part in community outreach programmes. "I want to use media platforms to promote awareness about inclusion and accessibility," she says.

Her journey is far from over. Kayleigh remains determined to grow as a leader and advocate. "Whether through public speaking, community work, or future international platforms, I want to keep breaking barriers," she says with confidence.

For Kayleigh, the crown is not the final goal. It is a stepping stone toward a world where Deaf voices are heard, respected, and celebrated.

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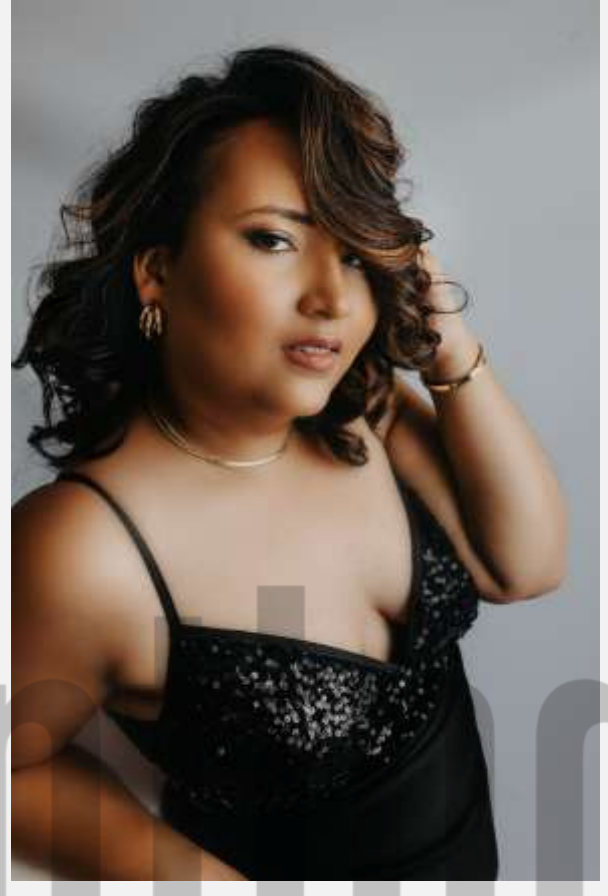

# Artifex Creative *Photography*

## *Socials*

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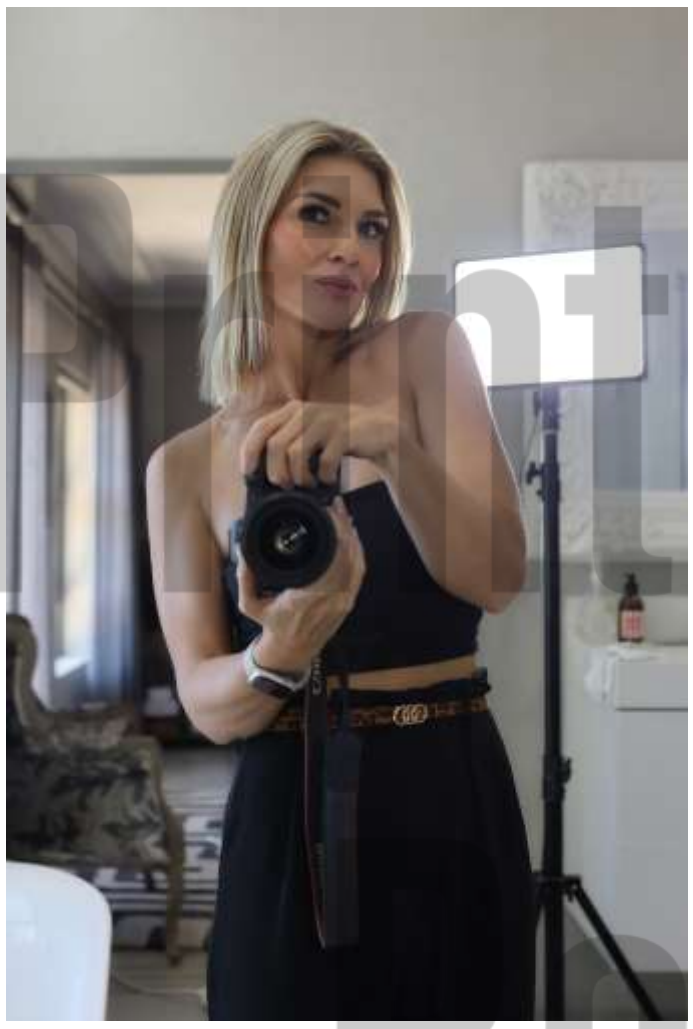
#Pageant

# Interview with Chrissy Bruwer

## Owner of Artifex Creative Photography



Chrissy did not plan to become a photographer. In fact, her journey began almost by accident. Today, Chrissy is the owner and founder of Artifex Creative Photography, but her first love was painting and drawing. “Creativity has always been part of who I am,” Chrissy says. “I chose art as an additional subject in high school, and I was always drawn to anything creative.”

In 2009, while engaged to her husband, Chrissy was introduced to photography through him. Sports photography was one of his hobbies, and he owned professional equipment. That same year, the couple prepared to get married and relocate from Port Elizabeth to Cape Town. It was a big change. “It was a completely new chapter for us,” Chrissy explains.

**After the move, her mother-in-law suggested she enrol in a year-long photography course with CLP. It was meant to help her settle into a new city and meet new people. Instead, it changed her life. “It turned out to be one of the most pivotal decisions I have ever made,” Chrissy says.**

She began by learning film photography, developing images in a darkroom. “Watching an image come to life in the developer tray is something very special,” she recalls. “It gave me a deep appreciation for the technical and artistic foundations of photography.” When the course shifted to digital photography, Chrissy realised her hobby had become a calling.

After completing the course, Chrissy felt a strong responsibility to honour the investment her mother-in-law had made. Entrepreneurship was not new to her. “My father always said I could turn a small opportunity into something meaningful,” she says. She was also inspired by her mother, who started her own preschool and improved the family’s financial stability. “I have immense respect for what she did. She showed me what courage looks like.”

**With that example, Chrissy knew she wanted to build something of her own. Together with her husband, she brainstormed names for the business. The name Artifex, meaning creator or artist, stood out. And so Artifex Creative Photography was born.**

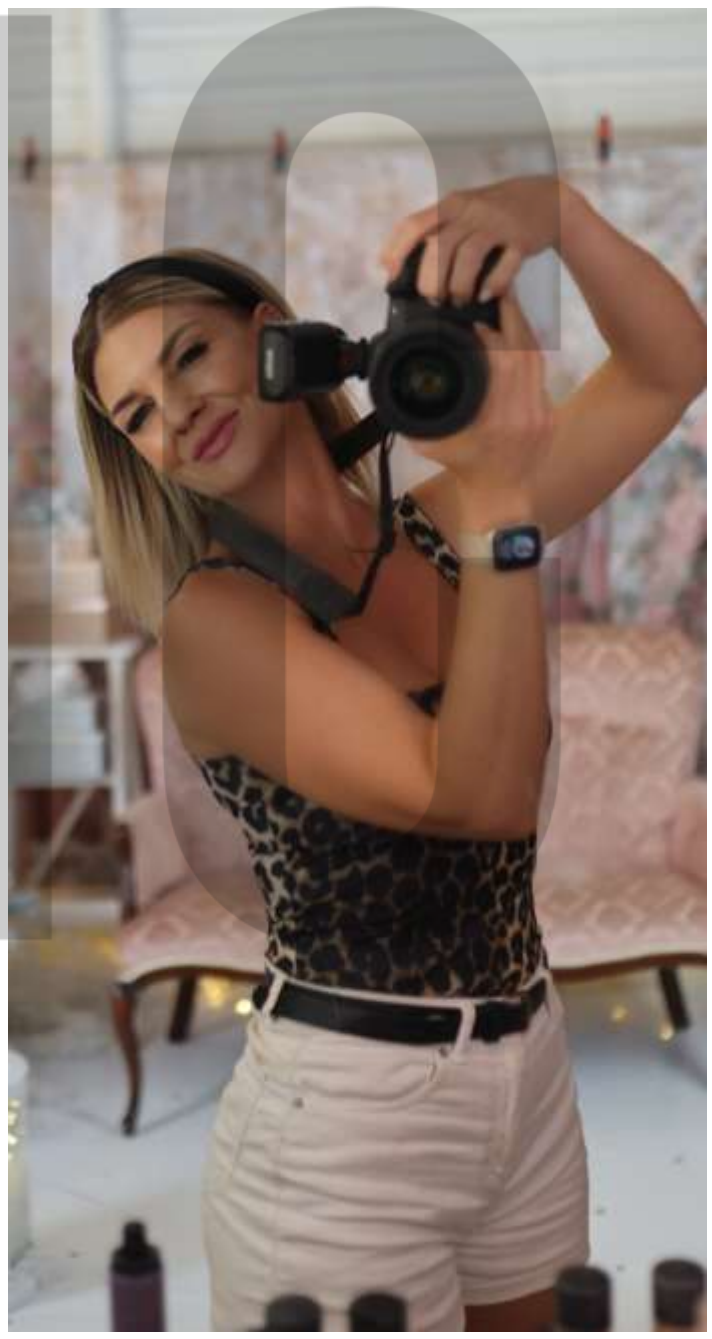
Chrissy describes her signature style as soft and feminine, yet strong. “I love creating portraits that balance elegance with confidence,” she explains. “I want the images to feel refined and beautiful, but still powerful.” She focuses on natural features, thoughtful lighting, and polished styling, while keeping personality at the centre.

For many years, maternity and newborn photography were the heart of her business. “It was my first creative love,” she says. But over time, she felt limited. Recently, she began focusing more intentionally on working with models. “Each model brings something unique. No two sessions are the same. It unlocked a new level of creativity for me.”

More than the artistry, Chrissy values the connection. “Watching the girls grow in confidence and win titles feels just as meaningful as my own achievements,” she says. “Their wins feel like my wins.” She has also collaborated with respected brands such as Veaudry, Nish Lady, SOBE and Leatt, experiences she describes as enriching and professionally rewarding.

Chrissy has also achieved international award-winning status, a milestone she describes as life-changing. After studying for one to two years under internationally respected portrait photographer Sue Bryce, someone she still considers her idol, Chrissy began to see her dream of global recognition come within reach.

**“Becoming internationally recognised had always been a dream of mine,” Chrissy says. “Studying through Sue’s school made that dream feel possible.”**



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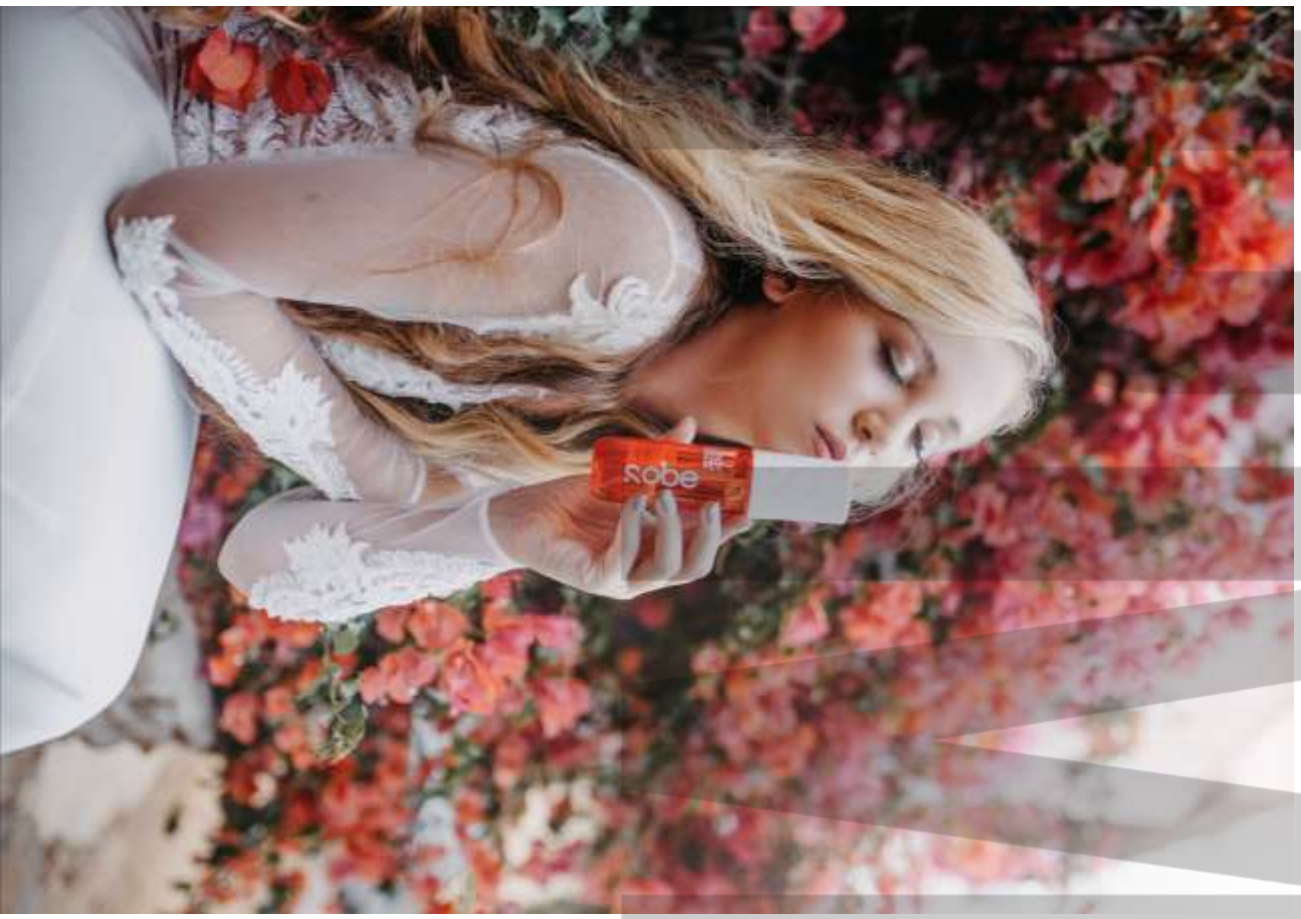
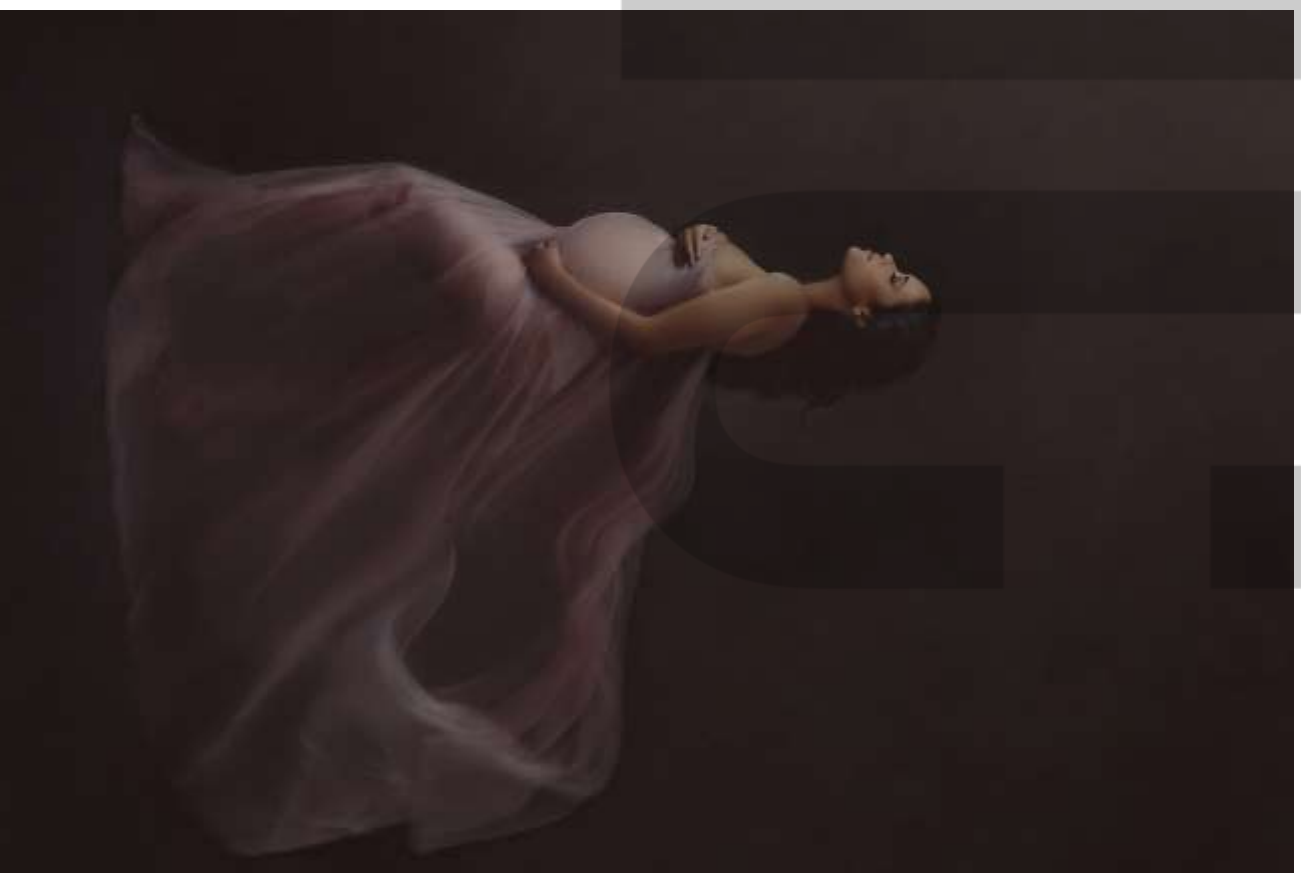




#Pageant

# Interview with Chrissy Bruwer

## Owner of Artifex Creative Photography

Determined to apply everything she had learned, Chrissy poured her heart into a carefully planned maternity shoot. From makeup and hair to lighting, movement, and styling, every detail was intentional. “I gave it my absolute all,” she explains. “I spent hours upon hours editing the image to perfection because I knew it had to represent my very best work.”

With quiet hope but little expectation, she entered the photograph into Sue’s international competition. When the results were announced, Chrissy had placed second in the world. “I could hardly believe it,” she says. “That moment changed everything for me. It was confirmation that the years of studying, refining my craft, and believing in the vision were worth it.”

The achievement not only earned her international recognition but also strengthened her confidence as an artist. It marked a turning point in her career, proving that dedication, education, and persistence can open doors far beyond what once seemed possible.

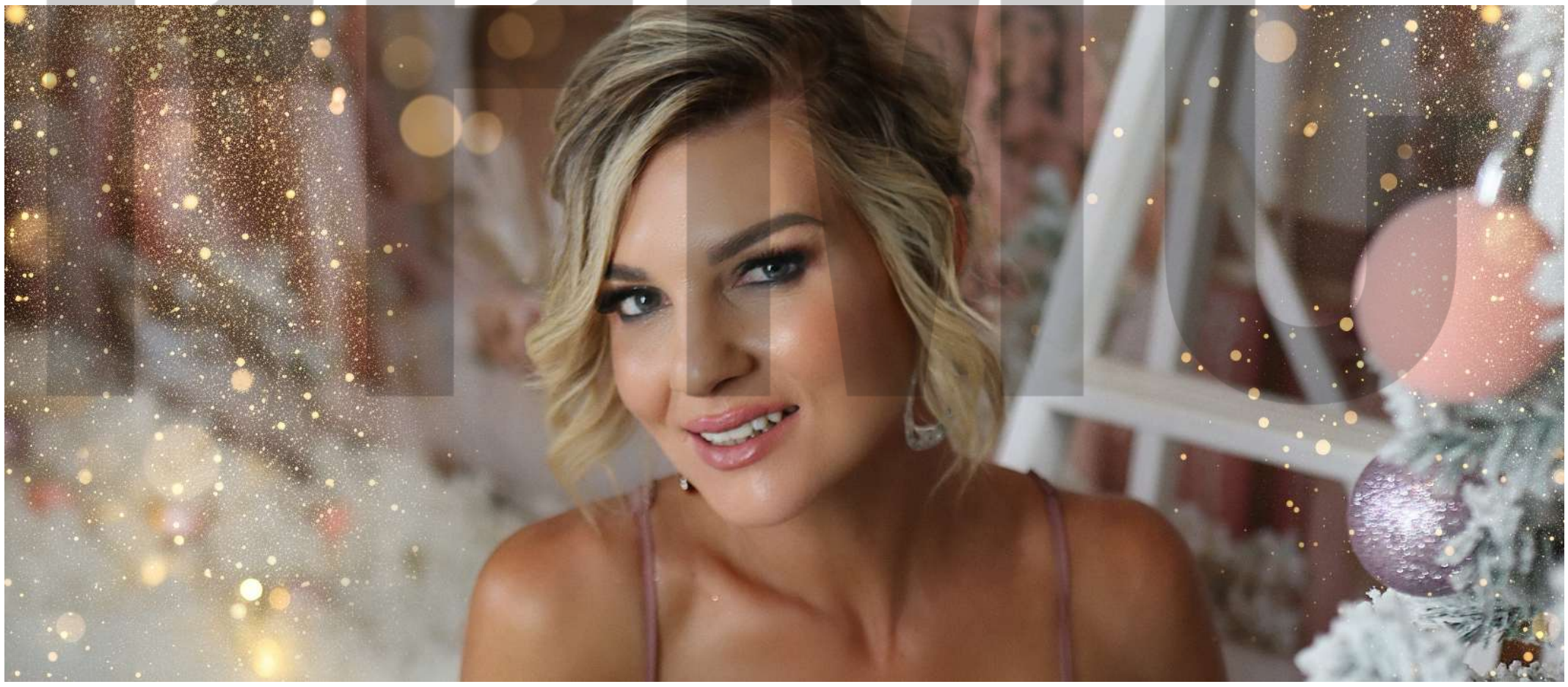
Connection is central to Chrissy’s process. Each session begins with hair and makeup, done by Chrissy herself. “This is where trust is built,” she explains. Music plays, conversations flow, and nerves ease before stepping in front of the camera. She guides her clients through posing and expression, often demonstrating poses herself to bring laughter and comfort. “Anyone can embody a model in their own way. They just need the right guidance.”

For Chrissy, an impactful portrait is about emotion. “If there is life in the eyes, the portrait resonates,” she says. While technical quality matters, she believes emotion transforms an image from beautiful to unforgettable.

Like many creatives, she has faced challenges, from equipment costs to long hours. One of the biggest obstacles was losing control of her social media account after it was hacked. “Visibility is everything in this industry,” she says. “Being talented is one thing. Being seen is another.” The experience taught her the importance of digital strategy and consistency.

Readers who would like to experience Chrissy’s work for themselves can book a personalised shoot directly with her. Chrissy is based at Contermanskloof Farm, Contermanskloof Road, Durbanville, Cape Town, South Africa, 7550, where she runs her studio in a peaceful farm setting.

Bookings and enquiries can be made via Facebook at @artifexcp, Instagram at @artifex_cp, or by email at info@artifex.co.za. Clients can also explore her portfolio and learn more about her services by visiting her official website at www.artifex.co.za.



MISS TEEN UNIQUE
EASTERN CAPE
FINALIST
2026

MISS TEEN UNIQUE
EASTERN CAPE
FINALIST

# Oyama Ngcai

MISS TEEN UNIQUE
EASTERN CAPE
FINALIST

MISS TEEN UNIQUE
EASTERN CAPE
FINALIST
2026

*Finalist

# Interview with Oyama Ngcai

## Miss Teen Unique EC 2026 Finalist

At just 15 years old, Oyama Ngcai is already making her mark as a finalist for Miss Teen Unique Eastern Cape. Born and raised in the skillful and talented community of Ngqeleni, Oyama carries a vision far beyond her small town, blending ambition with a deep sense of purpose.

**"It was a moment of pure overwhelmed joy. Seeing my name on that list felt like a validation of my potential, and my heart stayed racing for hours," she recalls. "It wasn't just a win for me, but a proud moment for my family and my community."**

Oyama was drawn to the Miss Teen Unique platform because of its focus on uniqueness and leadership. "I wanted a space where I could grow my confidence and prove that a young woman from a small town can have a massive impact," she explains. "I wanted to be a voice for those who feel overlooked."

When asked what sets her apart, Oyama doesn't hesitate. "My resilience and my ability to connect with people from all walks of life make me stand out. I don't just carry a title; I carry a spirit of service. I am grounded in my roots but have a vision that reaches far beyond the horizon."

**For Oyama, the platform's objective means more than just competing—it's about purpose. "To me, it means 'purpose over beauty.' It's about using this influence to uplift others and create a chain reaction of empowerment among the youth in the Eastern Cape," she says.**

Growing up in Ngqeleni shaped Oyama's outlook on life. "Ngqeleni taught me the value of community and the strength found in simplicity. Growing up there instilled a 'village mentality' in me, knowing that we are all responsible for one another's success. It gave me my grit and my gratitude," she reflects.

Her community has been a source of inspiration. "Seeing the untapped talent in my neighbors, from local crafters to gifted speakers, inspired me to dream of creating better opportunities for us," Oyama says. "Their hard work motivated me to pursue excellence so I can eventually give back to the place that raised me."

Oyama's aspiration to fulfill her country's needs is practical and grounded. "It means active citizenship. Practically, it looks like volunteering, mentoring younger students, and being a solution-seeker rather than a complain-maker. It's about doing the small things with great love to build a better South Africa," she explains.

Her passions extend beyond pageantry. "I am deeply passionate about youth empowerment and human injustice. I want to ensure that young people have the tools and emotional support they need to break cycles of poverty and reach their full potential," she adds.

Balancing schoolwork with pageant preparation is no easy feat, but Oyama has found a system that works. "It requires strict discipline and a very detailed calendar. I treat my studies as my foundation and my pageant work as my passion project. I've learned that 'balance' isn't about doing everything at once, but about being 100% present in whatever I am doing at that moment," she says.

Challenges have been part of her journey, including self-doubt and the stigma of coming from a small town. "I overcame this by surrounding myself with positive mentors and constantly reminding myself that my background is my strength, not a limitation," Oyama shares.

Her life motto guides her every step. "'Be happy with what you have whilst working for what you need' means practicing active contentment. It's about being deeply grateful for my current blessings while maintaining the hunger and drive to reach for higher goals. It prevents greed while fueling ambition," she explains.

Family plays a central role in Oyama's motivation. "My mother is my greatest inspiration. Her strength and selfless nature showed me that true leadership is about serving others. Every goal I reach is a tribute to the sacrifices she made for me," Oyama says.

Looking ahead, Oyama has clear plans for the impact she wants to make in the Eastern Cape. "I want to launch a series of 'Uniquely You' workshops across rural schools in the province, focusing on career guidance and self-esteem building. I want every girl in the Eastern Cape to know that her circumstances do not define her future," she declares.

Her message to other young girls dreaming big is simple and powerful. "Your dreams are valid, and your location is not your limit. Do not wait for permission to be great—start where you are, use what you have, and never let anyone's small imagination keep you from your big destiny," Oyama says with conviction.

With her determination, grounded mindset, and clear vision, Oyama Ngcai is proving that age and geography are not barriers to making a difference. Her journey is just beginning, but her impact is already being felt in Ngqeleni and beyond.

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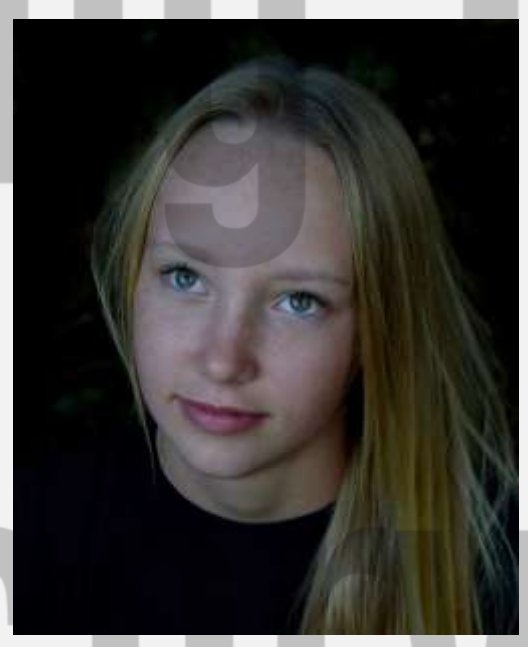

# André Smith

**PPMC MAGAZINE ISSUE 168**

*Emotion Behind The Lens*

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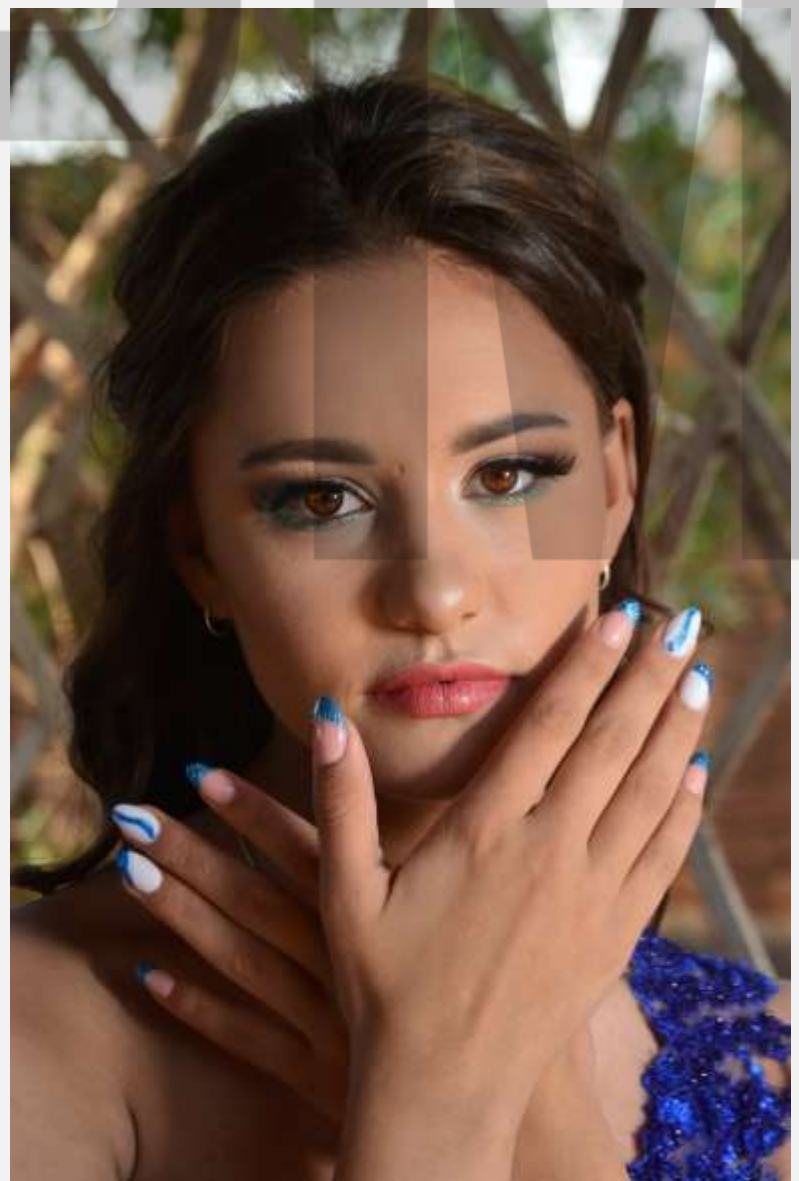

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#Phata

# Interview with André Smith

## Owner of Uhmbrellha Photography

André's journey with Uhmbrellha Photography started long before the name was ever printed on a business card. What began as a simple hobby slowly grew into something far more meaningful. "I started photography as a hobby many years ago, but eventually it became more than a hobby as I got more experienced," André says. For him, the camera was never just equipment. It was another canvas.

As a child, André was drawn to art in all its forms. He explored painting and later became a visual artist. Creativity followed him everywhere. "Since childhood I had an interest in art and eventually became a visual artist, and the art was transferred to photography," he explains. Before fully stepping into photography, he had already lived a creative life. He had his own band, worked on movie productions, and immersed himself in design. Photography felt like a natural next step.

He first discovered his passion for photography around the age of 20, long before digital cameras became common. "I discovered my passion for photography long before the arrival of digital cameras," André recalls. In the early days, he experimented with different genres. He shot whatever inspired him at the time. Over the years, he decided to create a brand that could cover all those genres under one name. "A suitable name was required to express my photography, and that's when Uhmbrellha Photography was born," he says. The name represents variety, creativity, and protection under one vision.

André describes his photography style as deeply guided by creativity and emotion. "With a creative background which included music, painting and movie productions, it was inevitable that creativity guided my photography," he says. For him, emotion is essential. "I realized soon that emotion is a must when photographing people." Rather than focusing only on poses, André focuses on feeling. He believes a photograph should show more than a face; it should reveal something real.

Fashion and modelling photography hold a special place in his heart. "My favourite genre is definitely fashion and modelling photography," André says. Having spent many years in the fashion industry as an agent, designer, and choreographer, he understands how fashion moves and breathes. "I try and let it reflect in my photography," he adds. His background allows him to direct with confidence and capture striking, polished images.

Preparation is serious business for André. A mood board is always his starting point. "A mood board is essential. It comprises of current fashion photographs from some fashion magazines. I study them and then give it my own interpretation," he explains. He does not copy trends but uses them as inspiration to create something original.

Among the photographers who inspire him are SJ van Zyl and Deon Coetzee. "They have a clear understanding of commercial, editorial and high fashion photography," André says. He respects their clarity of vision and strong technical skills.

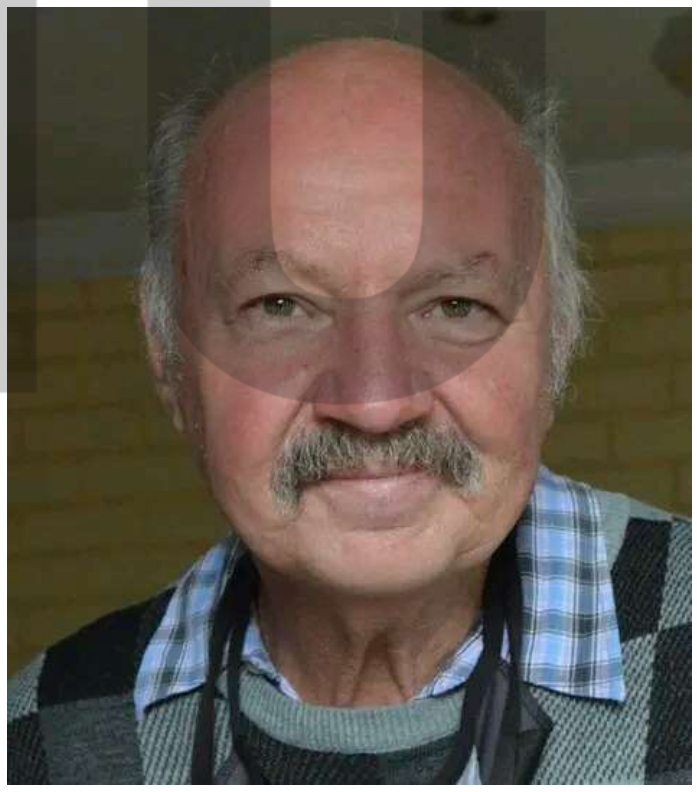
Like any professional, André has faced challenges. One of his toughest moments happened at a wedding. "There was a family feud and half of the guests did not arrive, leaving the bride visibly upset," he remembers. Instead of allowing the tension to ruin the day, André stepped in with calm reassurance. "I had to remind her that it wasn't about the guests but about her and the groom." In the end, the bride accepted the situation, and the celebration continued smoothly.

Making clients feel comfortable is one of André's strengths. "I try to make clients feel comfortable in front of the lens by communicating with them continuously and reminding them how unique and awesome they are in their own way," he says. He believes confidence creates the best images. Not every shoot goes exactly as planned. At one matric farewell shoot, André expected a simple session. Instead, 16 family members arrived to join the photos. "I played director like never before, but it all worked out in the end," he laughs. Moments like these test his ability to adapt quickly. When it comes to trends, André prefers to stay true to himself. "I rather try and focus on my own style than following trends," he explains. Instead of stiff, static poses, he guides clients into movements that express their emotions. "Trends will come and go, but real emotion will stay forever."

For aspiring photographers, André's advice is clear. "After learning the basic essentials, first develop your own style, become known, and then look at photography as a business," he says. He believes style builds identity, and identity builds success.

Balancing creativity with business is important to him. "I try to incorporate creativity in every aspect of my photography, even in the business side by creating individual packages for a client's need," he explains. Each client receives a personalised experience.

Looking ahead to 2026, André is excited about blending music and design into his work. "I plan on incorporating music and design in my photography, almost creating a still music video in a photograph," he shares. His long-term vision is clear. "As a photographer one should never stop developing both technically and in a creative manner. My plan for Uhmbrellha Photography is to become a creative force with a brand new story behind every photograph."



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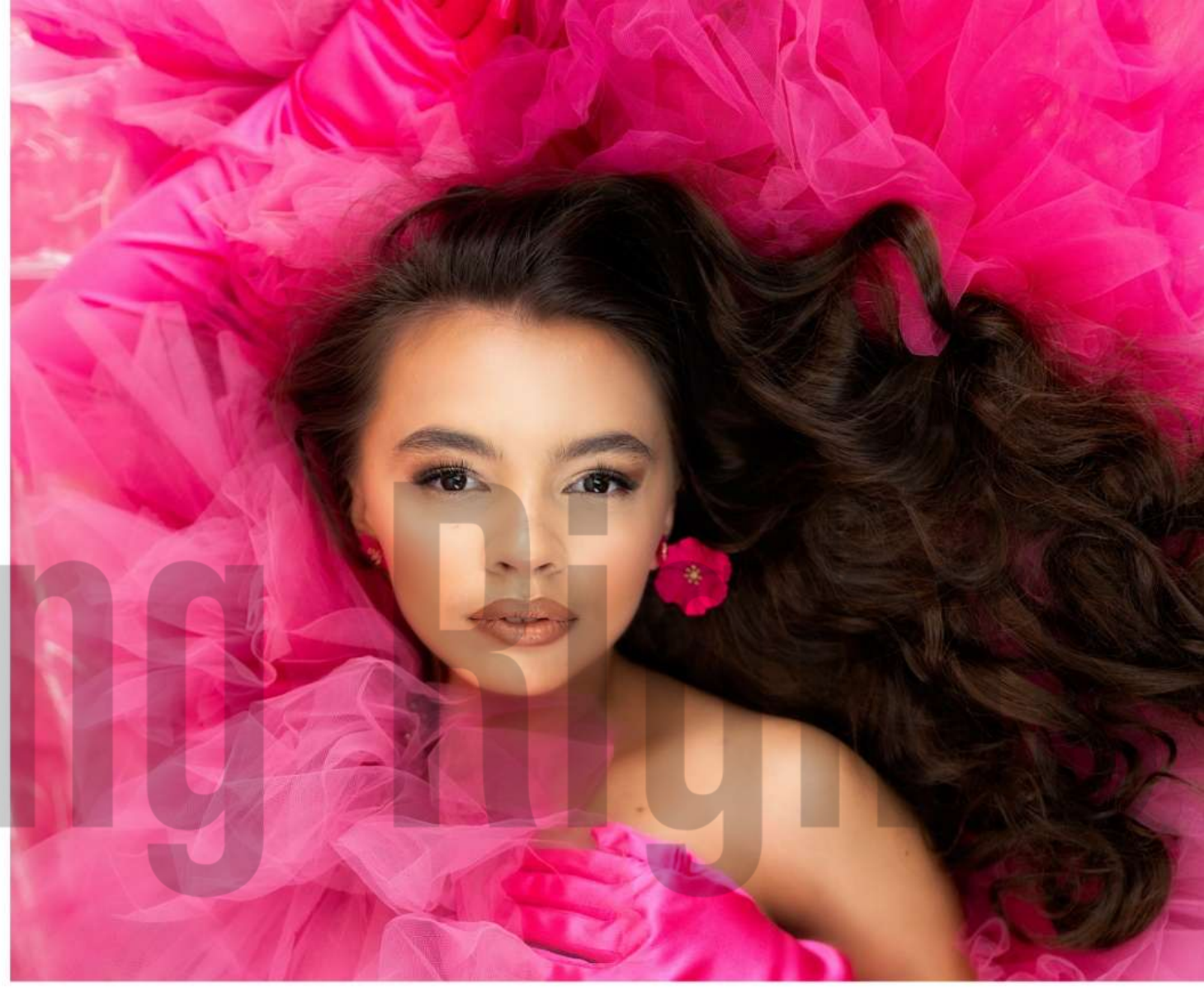
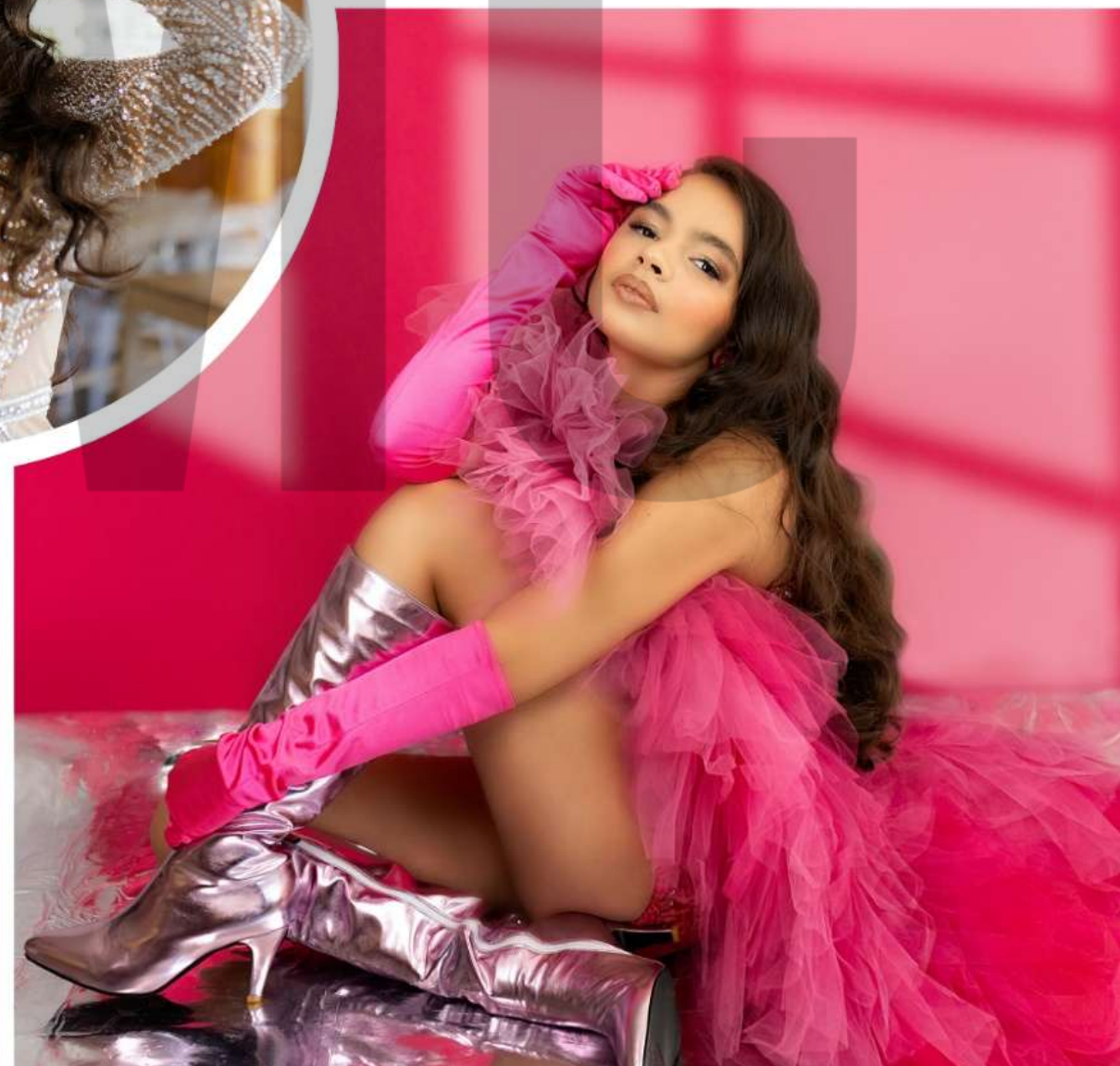


Mila Meyer



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#Pageant

# Interview with Mila Meyer

## Miss Teen Universe 2025

At just 13 years old, Mila is already living a dream many girls only imagine. When her name was announced as the winner of Miss Teen Universe 2025, the young South African could hardly believe it. “When they called my name, I was completely overwhelmed with joy,” Mila says. “My heart was racing and I felt so grateful. It was a dream moment I will never forget.”

For Mila, entering an international competition at such a young age was never about the crown alone. It was about growth. “I wanted to challenge myself and grow in confidence,” she explains. “Pageants have helped me find my voice, and I wanted to represent my country proudly while meeting girls from all over the world.”

Her journey to the Miss Teen Universe stage began when she stepped into the modeling world and became part of the Elite 15 Ace Girls. From there, she committed herself fully. She trained, competed nationally, and pushed herself to improve with every opportunity. That dedication earned her the chance to represent South Africa internationally in Turkey. “Every step taught me discipline, confidence, and perseverance,” Mila says.

One of the highlights of the competition had nothing to do with the spotlight. “Meeting girls from different countries was so exciting,” she says with a smile. “Learning about their cultures and forming friendships felt like being part of a global sisterhood.” For Mila, those connections are just as important as the title she now carries.

Preparation for such a major stage required both mental and physical focus. Mila practiced her walk, interviews, and stage presence regularly. She worked closely with her coach, Biance Edwards, preparing the choreography for her dance talent. “I prepared the choreography with my coach Biance Edwards for my talent, which was a dance routine,” she explains. Hip Hop dance plays a big role in her life and helps her stay fit and confident. “Mentally, I focused on staying positive and believing in myself.” Mila believes it was her character that helped her stand out to the judges. “I believe my kindness, honesty, and authenticity helped me stand out,” she says. “I always try to be myself and let my true personality shine.”

Of course, even a winner feels nervous. “Yes, before stepping on stage I felt nervous,” Mila admits. “I took deep breaths and reminded myself that I had worked hard to be there. That gave me calm confidence.” It is this simple but powerful mindset that carried her through the most intense moments of the competition.

Behind every young queen is a strong support system, and Mila is quick to acknowledge hers. “My family has been my biggest support, especially my parents and grandmother,” she says. She also credits her coach Biance Edwards and Chrissy Bruwer, who takes care of her hair, makeup, and photography. “They encourage me every step of the way and remind me to stay humble and kind.”

Through this experience, Mila has discovered strengths she did not always know she had. “I’ve learned that I am stronger than I thought and that confidence grows when you step out of your comfort zone,” she says.

As Miss Teen Universe 2025, Mila carries a message close to her heart. “Believe in yourself, be kind, and don’t be afraid to dream big,” she says. “Every girl has a unique light — let it shine.”

Balancing school, hobbies, and pageant responsibilities requires discipline. Mila attends Growth Point School and follows the Cambridge program. “Staying organized is very important to me,” she explains. “I plan my time carefully to balance schoolwork, modeling, dance, and photography classes.” Her schedule may be full, but she handles it with maturity beyond her years.

Pageants have shaped her in many ways. “Pageants have helped me develop confidence, communication skills, discipline, and leadership,” Mila says. “They’ve also taught me how to present myself professionally.” These skills, she believes, will guide her far beyond the stage.

During her reign, Mila hopes to focus on giving back. She is passionate about supporting children with cancer and helping elderly people. “I love doing charity work and want to use my title to make a positive difference,” she says.

For girls who dream of one day wearing an international crown, Mila offers heartfelt advice. “Work hard, stay focused, and always be yourself,” she says. “The crown is beautiful, but the growth and friendships are even more special.”

Looking ahead, Mila’s calendar is already filling up. During her reign, she plans to inspire young girls, grow in confidence, and expand her charity projects. She will continue modeling, dancing Hip Hop, and developing her passion for photography, attending weekly classes to improve her skills.

And the journey is far from over. Mila will represent South Africa again from 8 to 18 May 2026 in Turkey for the Miss Teen World Crown. “I am really looking forward to returning to Turkey and meeting girls from all over the world,” she says. For Mila, this is only the beginning of a bright and meaningful future.

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*Lesedi Sehlabi*

**Pageantry as Platform for Calm Confidence Clear Purpose Growth Leadership and Impact**

Instagram: @lejoy390
Facebook: Lejoy

#Pageant

# Interview with Lesedi Sehlabi

## International Miss South Africa Finalist

Lesedi speaks about pageantry with calm confidence and clear purpose. For her, stepping onto a stage was never only about wearing a beautiful dress or smiling for judges. It was about growth, leadership, and using her voice for something bigger than herself.

"I was inspired to start competing in pageants because I saw it as a platform to grow as a young woman and to make a meaningful difference in my community," Lesedi explains. "Pageantry is not only about beauty, but about confidence, leadership, and having a voice." From the beginning, she knew she wanted to speak about issues that affect young people. "I wanted to use my voice to talk about bullying, substance abuse, teenage pregnancy, and mental health awareness," she says.

Lesedi's journey began when she entered Miss Star SA, her very first pageant. It was a decision that changed her life. "That was my first pageant experience, and it opened my eyes to a whole new world of opportunities, growth, and sisterhood," she recalls. "From that moment, I knew this was something I wanted to continue pursuing." What started as a single entry quickly became a passion.

One of her proudest moments came when she was crowned Miss Golden Heart. Lesedi still remembers the feeling clearly. "Being crowned Miss Golden Heart has been one of my most memorable moments," she says. "The title represents kindness, empathy, and compassion — values that truly define who I am. Hearing my name called was emotional and unforgettable." For Lesedi, the crown was not just an achievement. It was a reflection of her character.

Behind every confident walk on stage is careful preparation. Lesedi takes both her mental and physical preparation seriously. "Mentally, I focus on self-belief, prayer, and positive affirmations," she explains. "I remind myself of my purpose and why I started." Physically, she commits to a healthy lifestyle. "I practice my walk, improve my posture, and make sure I am always prepared," she adds. Preparation, she believes, is the foundation of confidence.

Throughout her journey, one person has stood firmly by her side. "My biggest supporter has been my mom," Lesedi says with a warm smile. "She has been there for me every step of the way, encouraging me and believing in me even when I doubted myself. Her support means everything to me." That support has helped Lesedi push through challenges.

Balancing school and pageant life has not always been easy. "There have been moments of self-doubt, and balancing school and pageant preparation can be challenging," she admits. Still, she found ways to manage it. "I stay organized, manage my time wisely, and remind myself that growth comes from stepping outside your comfort zone." Education remains a priority. "School is very important to me, so I make sure my work is always completed while I prepare for competitions."

What Lesedi enjoys most about pageantry is the personal development it brings. "I enjoy the growth and confidence I have gained," she says. "I also love meeting new people and inspiring younger girls to believe in themselves." Through her journey, she has developed valuable skills. "I have improved my public speaking, confidence, discipline, leadership, and time management," she explains. These are lessons she carries beyond the stage.

When it comes to staying calm under bright lights, Lesedi keeps it simple. "Preparation gives me confidence," she says. "I remind myself to breathe, smile, and enjoy the moment because being on stage is a blessing and an opportunity." That mindset allows her to remain poised and present.

Her passion for community work continues to guide her path. "I am passionate about raising awareness about bullying, mental health, substance abuse, and teenage pregnancy," she says. "Young people need guidance, mentorship, and safe spaces to grow." Lesedi believes pageantry gives her a platform to start important conversations.

She draws inspiration from strong women who use their platforms for good. Yet, her greatest inspiration remains close to home. "In my personal life, my biggest inspiration is my mom because of her strength and constant support," she says.

The most important lesson Lesedi has learned is one she holds close to her heart. "Confidence comes from within," she explains. "Titles may come and go, but character, discipline, and growth stay with you forever."

Looking ahead, Lesedi's goals are clear. "I want to continue growing in pageantry and compete at higher levels while expanding my impact in my community," she says. Beyond competitions, her dream is simple but powerful. "I aim to become a strong, influential woman who inspires and uplifts others."

**For Lesedi, the stage is not just a place to shine. It is a place to speak, to serve, and to grow into the woman she is becoming.**

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# Lizzer Ramatsi

#Finalist

# Interview with Lizzer Ramatsi

## Miss Inspire South Africa 2026 Finalist

Being named a finalist for Miss Inspire SA 2026 was a moment of pure joy for Lizzer Ramatsi. “I felt over the moon and super proud! Being named a finalist gave me an instant boost of confidence and excitement to represent my province and inspire others,” she says. Representing the North West Province in the Queen category is more than a title for Lizzer; it’s a responsibility she wears with pride.

**“It means carrying the spirit and pride of the North West Province on my shoulders. I see it as an honour to showcase the province’s culture, talent, and values on a bigger stage and to uplift its youth,” she explains.**

Lizzer’s motivation to enter Miss Inspire SA comes from her desire to make a positive impact. “I wanted a platform to amplify my passion for community service and personal growth. The pageant gives me a chance to inspire young people and promote positive change,” she shares.

Central to her mission is mental health advocacy, a cause close to her heart. “Mental health is important because it affects everyone, especially young people chasing their dreams. I believe open conversations and support can break the stigma and help people thrive,” Lizzer says.

**Her advocacy is deeply personal. “I’ve seen friends struggle silently with stress and anxiety, which motivated me to learn more about mental health and become an advocate for open, supportive conversations and accessible resources. I’ve also struggled silently myself.**

Being a remedial learner and trying to catch up at school caused a lot of low self-esteem. I got depressed and couldn’t voice out my feelings until I decided to let my voice out. Now, I’m the founder of Lizzer Resilience Health, which focuses on mental health,” she reveals.

Lizzer plans to use her Miss Inspire SA platform to make a difference. “I plan to share personal stories, organise workshops, and partner with mental-health organisations to spread messages of self-care, support, and guidance. I’ll use my voice to encourage people to seek help and look after their wellbeing,” she says. Her aim is not just awareness but action, ensuring young people feel empowered to ask for help when they need it.

Preparation for the big day on 28 March in Benoni is in full swing. Lizzer shares, “I’m putting together a solid rehearsal schedule, fine-tuning my performance, and working with my team on logistics like venue setup and promotion. I’m also focusing on mental preparation to stay sharp on the day.” Despite the hard work, Lizzer says the journey has been exhilarating. “The most exciting part has been seeing my hard work pay off and getting support from the community. It keeps me motivated to push even harder,” she says.

Of course, the path hasn’t been without challenges. “I’ve dealt with time management and self-doubt. I overcame them by setting clear goals, staying disciplined with my practice, and seeking mentorship when needed,” Lizzer explains. She credits her support system for keeping her grounded throughout the process. “My biggest supporters have been my mom, Jennifer Thobejane, and Dipuo Matlala. They give me encouragement and practical advice every step of the way,” she says.

When asked what message she would give young people struggling with mental health, Lizzer is firm. “It’s okay to ask for help. Focus on self-care, set small achievable goals, and remember that challenges are part of growth – you’re not alone,” she says. Her confidence on stage comes from careful preparation and self-belief. “I stay confident by visualizing success, keeping a positive mindset, and reminding myself of my preparation and the support behind me,” Lizzer shares.

Winning the title would be more than a personal achievement for Lizzer; it would shine a light on her province. “Winning would be a personal milestone and a boost for my province, inspiring others to chase their dreams and showcasing local talent on a bigger platform,” she says. She also encourages the public to come out and support the event. “People should come out to experience great energy, celebrate local talent, and show community spirit – their support fuels performers and makes the event unforgettable,” she adds.

Lizzer Ramatsi’s journey to Miss Inspire SA 2026 is about more than pageantry. It is a story of personal growth, advocacy, and the power of using your voice to uplift others. Through her work, she hopes to inspire young people across South Africa to embrace their potential, speak out, and take care of their mental health.

With her determination, passion, and heart for her community, Lizzer is ready to make her mark on the Miss Inspire SA stage.

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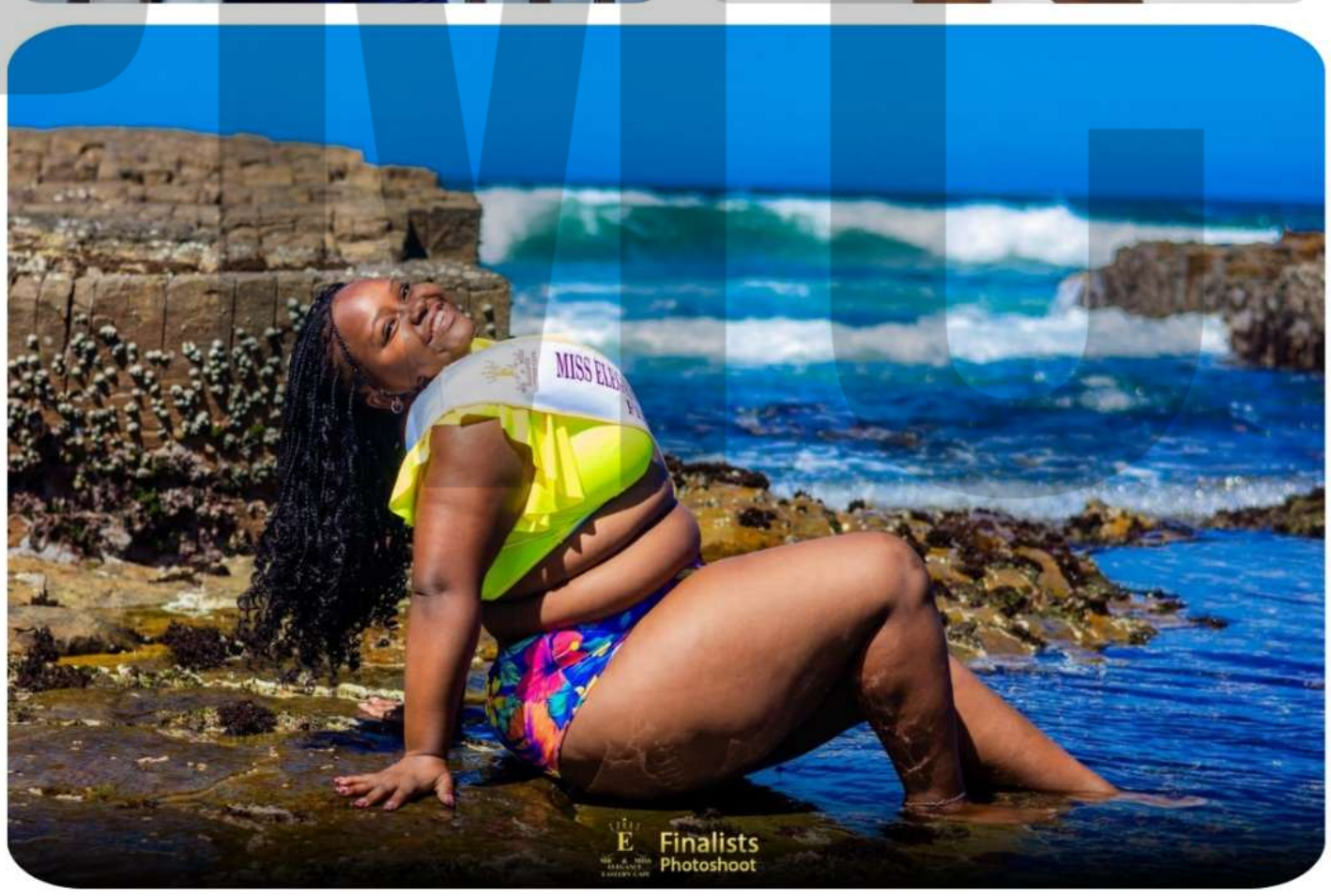
# LISAKHANYA MKOTO



#Finalist

# Interview with Lisakhanya Mkoto

## Miss Elegance Eastern Cape 2026 Finalist

At just 12 years old, Lisakhanya took her first step into the modeling world under the Motherwell Modeling Foundation. Today, at 20 and in her second year of studies, Lisakhanya stands tall as a Miss Elegance Eastern Cape 2026 finalist, carrying years of experience, growth and determination behind her name.

Lisakhanya says her journey began in a simple but life-changing way. “My mother’s best friend was the founder of Motherwell Modeling Foundation. She hosted a pageant that I attended, and I fell in love with modeling on that day,” Lisakhanya explains. “I told my mother that I want to join, and since then I never looked back.”

From that moment, modeling became more than just an activity. It became a space where Lisakhanya could grow into herself. What has kept her passionate over the years is clear. “Modeling has given me the opportunity to express confidence and creativity,” she says. “It has allowed me to grow personally, challenge myself, and connect with different people and styles. Most of all, I gained a lot of confidence as a plus-size model.”

Her hard work soon paid off. In 2021, Lisakhanya walked away with Model of the Year and Miss Photogenic titles. She remembers how important that year was. “Winning those titles boosted my confidence. It validated my hard work, dedication and growth,” she says. “It reminded me that I am capable of competing at a high level.”

The following year proved even bigger. In 2022, she held several major titles, including Face of PPMC Rising Star, Face of Devotion Eastern Cape Ambassador and Face of Devotion South Africa Teen Overall Winner. While each achievement mattered, one stood out.

“Being crowned Face of Devotion Eastern Cape Ambassador meant the most to me,” Lisakhanya shares. “That title was not just about beauty. It represented leadership, purpose and being a positive role model in my community.”

Being named Face of Devotion South Africa Teen Overall Winner was another unforgettable highlight. “It was a humbling moment for me,” she says. “It felt like all the hard work and late nights had finally paid off. I felt empowered. It reminded me that I am capable of achieving great things when I believe in myself.”

In 2023, Lisakhanya reached another milestone when she became Brand Ambassador of PPMC Magazine and won the cover page. “It felt so good to see my hard work recognized on such a visible platform,” she says. “Being on the cover was not just about the photo. It symbolized growth, dedication and stepping into a higher level of professionalism.” She adds that one of the highlights was receiving a sponsored photoshoot with Pro Design Photographer in Port Elizabeth.

Along the way, Lisakhanya has worked with talented creatives who helped shape her journey. She gives special thanks to BulutaImages Photography and Bayaz Photography for professional images, as well as designers NKD Designer and Cihoshe Creations for trusting her to showcase their garments.

Balancing modeling with academics is not always easy, but Lisakhanya remains focused. “I balance both by setting clear goals, staying organized and using my free time wisely,” she explains. “Modeling motivates me to work harder in my studies because it has strengthened my confidence, communication skills and ability to handle pressure.”

Starting young came with challenges. “One of the biggest was learning to handle criticism and pressure while still growing and discovering who I am,” she says. She also faced comments about her body. “I would always get asked why modeling when I have a big body,” Lisakhanya shares honestly. “Another challenge was struggling to get garments that fit me during fashion shows, as most designers cater for tiny models.” Instead of giving up, she used those moments as motivation to stand firm in her identity.

Looking back at her first runway and comparing it to where she stands now, Lisakhanya sees clear growth. “My growth from my very first runway to now being a Miss Elegance Eastern Cape 2026 finalist has been incredible,” she says. “After taking a two-year break, today I am standing as a finalist. I feel prepared, empowered and grateful.”

Being a Miss Elegance Eastern Cape finalist at this stage means more than a crown. “It is a reminder of how far I have come,” she says. “It motivates me to continue striving for excellence while staying true to who I am.”

Through her career, Lisakhanya aims to represent strong values. “My goal is to use my platform to inspire others to pursue their dreams fearlessly, stay true to their values and understand that hard work and dedication can open doors,” she explains.

Behind every confident walk is a strong support system. “My biggest supporter throughout my journey is my mothers,” Lisakhanya says with pride. “She encouraged me every step of the way, from my first runway to my recent achievements. Her belief in me and constant motivation have kept me focused and confident.” She also credits her family, her mentor Coach Ann and her friends for standing by her side.

Looking ahead, Lisakhanya’s dreams continue to grow. “My long-term goal in modeling is to grow professionally, inspire others and represent brands with purpose,” she says. “Beyond modeling, I want to use my experiences and education to empower young people and make a positive impact. Mostly, I would like to collaborate with designers because my passion is more into fashion modeling.”

For Lisakhanya, the journey that started at 12 is still unfolding — and she is walking it with confidence, purpose and pride.

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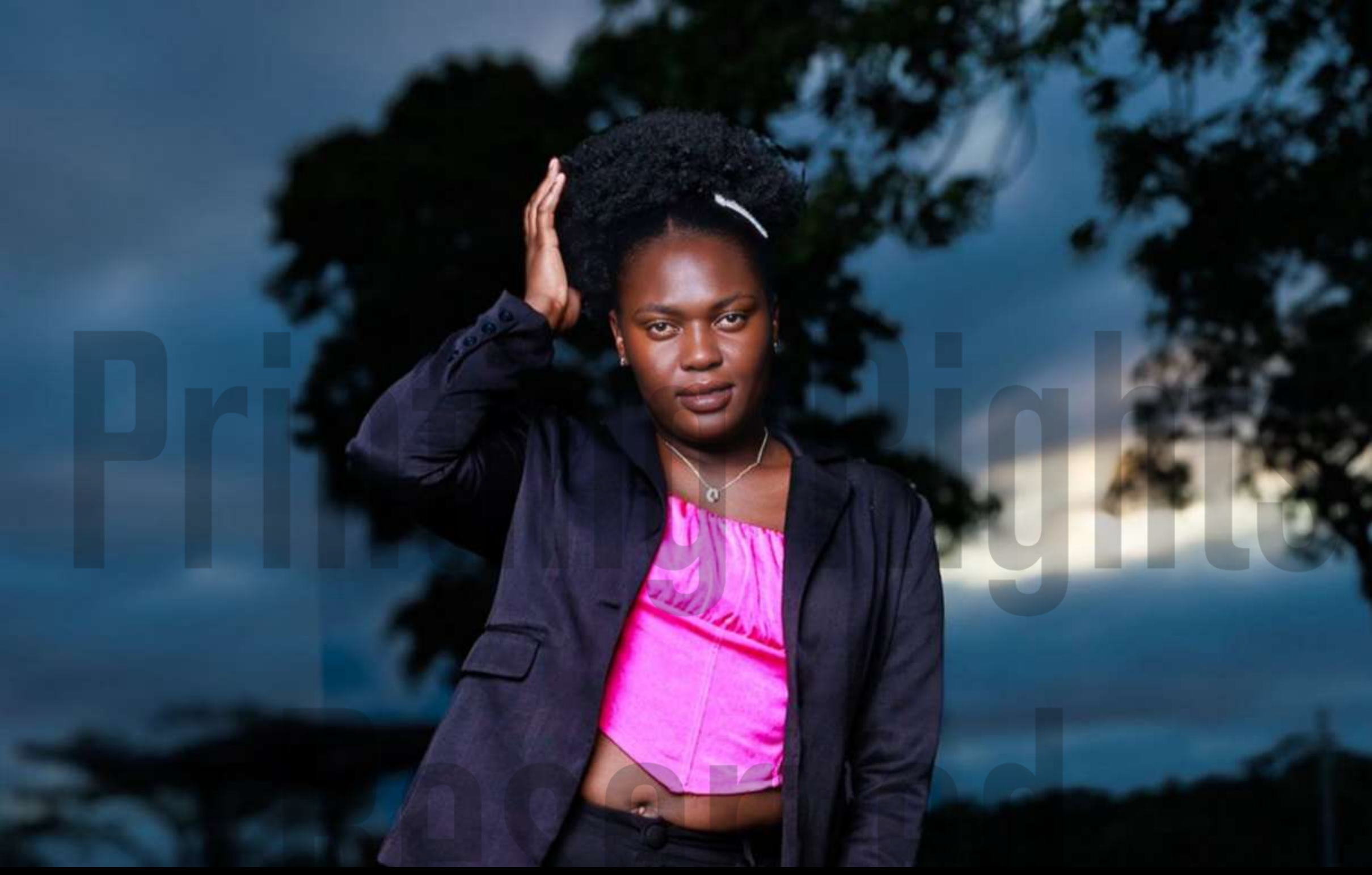

# Nonhle Mathabela

**At just 24, Nonhle Mathabela from Mpumalanga is already building a platform that is changing lives in her community. As the founder and director of Miss Edwaleni, Nonhle has turned her passion for young women into a movement rooted in growth, opportunity and leadership.**

**Nonhle says the idea for Miss Edwaleni came from a deep desire to empower girls in her community. "I founded Miss Edwaleni to empower young women in our community, providing a platform for them to showcase their talents, confidence, and beauty," Nonhle explains.**

**"My vision was to create a space where girls can grow, learn, and shine, while giving back to the community through charity work and promoting positive values." She adds that she wanted to celebrate culture and inspire the next generation of leaders.**

**Growing up in Dwaleni played a major role in shaping her purpose. Nonhle speaks openly about how the challenges around her became fuel for change. "Growing up in Dwaleni, despite its challenges, gave me a deep understanding of community spirit," she says.**

**"Seeing the impact of limited resources fueled my passion for community development." For Nonhle, even small projects can bring real change. "Dwaleni's struggles inspire me to create opportunities and make a difference, especially for young women."**

**For Nonhle, women's empowerment is not just a popular phrase. It is practical and action-driven. "Empowering women means creating real opportunities for them to thrive," she says. "It's about access to education, resources, and platforms where they can voice their ideas and lead." She believes empowerment is about helping women make informed choices about their lives and careers. "It's not just a concept. It's about tangible actions that uplift women and communities."**

**As a pageant director, Nonhle looks beyond appearance. "I'm looking for young women with substance and style," she says. Confidence, intelligence and a strong sense of self matter most to her.**

**"I want girls who are passionate about making a difference, who are authentic and not afraid to be themselves." While a warm smile and good communication skills are important, she believes "it's the heart and drive that truly impress me."**

#Director

# Introducing Nonhle Mathabela

## Founder and Director of Miss Edwaleni

Nonhle makes it clear that Miss Edwaleni focuses on more than crowns and sashes. “We focus on empowerment, not just pageantry,” she explains. Through workshops, mentorship and community projects, contestants build leadership skills and self-esteem. “We encourage them to identify their passions and strengths and support them in pursuing their goals.” For Nonhle, the aim is simple: “It’s about nurturing confident, compassionate leaders who inspire others.”

Starting Miss Edwaleni was not easy. Nonhle faced doubt and financial challenges in the beginning. “Some parents were hesitant to let their children join due to safety concerns and trust issues,” she recalls. She addressed this by being transparent and involving community leaders. Funding was another hurdle. “We sought local sponsors, applied for grants, and kept costs minimal.” Over time, persistence and trust helped the platform grow.

Before becoming a director, Nonhle competed in pageants herself. She says those experiences prepared her for leadership. “Competing taught me confidence, poise, event management and public speaking,” she says. “I learned how to handle pressure and connect with people.” Those lessons now guide her as she mentors others. “It’s about paying it forward and helping them shine.”

Winning the Face of Exotic Ambassador title marked a turning point in her life. Nonhle says it connected her to Mr Emanuel Langa, who became her mentor. “His guidance helped me discover my strengths and passions,” she shares. “That experience shaped me into who I am today.” It strengthened her determination to support others on their journeys.

Balancing leadership, mentorship and personal ambition requires focus. “It’s all about prioritisation and passion,” Nonhle says. She invests time in mentoring because she sees it as building the future. At the same time, she sets clear goals for herself. “When you’re doing what you love, it feels less like work.” Integrity is central to how Nonhle leads. “Integrity is everything to me,” she says firmly. “It’s the foundation of trust.” She believes in leading by example through honesty and accountability. “It’s about doing the right thing, even when no one’s watching.” For Nonhle, trust builds lasting impact in the community.

Miss Edwaleni promotes both beauty and purpose. “We’re about blending beauty with brains and heart,” she explains. Through community work and personal development workshops, contestants discover their purpose. “It’s not just about looks. It’s about using your platform to make a difference.” With the slogan “Your Platform Leaves a Mark,” Nonhle reminds every contestant that influence comes with responsibility.

Already, she has seen real change. “Our girls are stepping up as leaders,” she says proudly. Some have started businesses. Community engagement has grown. “It’s not just the girls; the whole community benefits from their passion and energy.”

**For young women who want to lead, Nonhle keeps her advice simple. “Own it. Don’t wait for permission to lead. Just do it.” She encourages girls to surround themselves with supportive people and to stay true to their values.**

Looking ahead, Nonhle dreams big. “My vision for Miss Edwaleni is to become a global platform, empowering young women from all walks of life to be agents of change,” she says. She plans to expand partnerships and launch new mentorship initiatives. As for herself, Nonhle remains focused on growth and impact.

“I’m passionate about continuing to innovate, inspire and mentor the next generation of women leaders,” she says. “I’m excited to see how we will shape the future.”

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# Chantell Coetzee

**A Crown of Faith, Love, Purpose, and Community Impact Rooted in Hope**

Facebook: Chantell Coetzee - Mrs Krugersdorp 2025 & @krugersdorppageants

#Pageant

# Interview with Chantell Coetzee

## Mrs. Krugersdorp 2024/25 & Charity Winner

With grace and quiet strength, Chantell stepped onto the stage and into a new chapter of her life when she was crowned Mrs Krugersdorp 2024/25 and awarded the title of Mrs Krugersdorp Charity. For Chantell, the moment was about far more than a sash and crown. It was about faith, family, and a promise she made in the darkest season of her life.

“The moment my name was called, I felt an overwhelming rush of gratitude and emotion,” Chantell says. “It wasn’t just excitement — it was peace.” She explains that as she stood on the stage, she felt surrounded by the memory of her son Dantè, her mother, and her godfather. “I knew deep in my heart that I wasn’t standing there alone. That crown symbolised more than a title; it represented their love, my strength, and every tear that turned into purpose.”

Chantell’s decision to enter the competition was deeply personal. “My inspiration came from my son, Dantè,” she shares softly. “Losing him changed my life forever, but it also awakened a purpose within me — to turn my pain into something beautiful.” She says she did not enter for recognition. Instead, it was a tribute. “Through Dantè’s memory, I wanted to remind others that even in loss, there is hope, and even in brokenness, there is still light.”

Holding both titles carries weight and meaning for Chantell. “These titles are both an honour and a responsibility,” she explains. “They give me a voice — not only to represent Krugersdorp but to advocate for compassion, awareness, and healing.” Being Mrs Krugersdorp Charity is especially close to her heart. “It means being the hands and heart of my community. It allows me to live out my purpose through service and to keep Dantè’s legacy alive through acts of kindness.”

Her journey to the crown was not easy. Chantell has faced deep personal loss, including saying goodbye to her mother, her godfather, and her son. “My journey was filled with faith, reflection, and healing,” she says. “Preparing for the pageant wasn’t about perfection; it was about growth. I discovered that when you stand in your truth, you become unstoppable.”

Children are at the centre of Chantell’s charity work, especially those living with ADHD and the parents who often feel alone. Through her foundation, Dantè’s Wings, she is building awareness and offering support. “I’m creating guidance and understanding for families who need it,” she explains. She also works closely with community organisations that focus on empowerment, mental health, and hope. “Giving back is how I honour my loved ones.”

During her reign, Chantell plans to focus on connection. “I want to build bridges between schools, families, and community initiatives,” she says. Her key focus areas will include mental health awareness, child support, and kindness-driven charity. “Compassion doesn’t cost money — it’s a choice we make daily.”

The competition itself came with emotional challenges. “My biggest challenge was carrying the weight of my grief while presenting my best self,” Chantell admits. “There were moments of doubt, but I leaned into prayer and faith.” She kept reminding herself of her purpose. “This journey wasn’t about being perfect; it was about being real.” At home, balance is essential. “My family is my foundation,” she says. “I plan my days carefully and prioritise what truly matters. My crown will never outweigh my role as a wife and mother.” Her husband and children have been her biggest supporters. “Their unconditional love gave me the courage to keep going.”

**Through pageantry, Chantell says she has grown in unexpected ways. “It taught me to embrace vulnerability as strength. I learned that beauty isn’t about appearances — it’s about authenticity and compassion.”**

When asked what makes a strong Mrs titleholder, Chantell answers without hesitation. “She leads with heart, serves with humility, and stands firm in her values. She uplifts others without seeking praise and uses her platform to inspire rather than impress.” In moments of pressure, Chantell turns to faith. “I pray. I remind myself who I am and whose I am,” she says. “When I focus on purpose instead of pressure, peace follows.”

Her message to women in her community is simple but powerful. “Your pain does not define you — your strength does. Every woman carries a crown, even if it’s invisible. Believe in your worth and let your heart lead the way.” Looking ahead to 2026, Chantell plans to expand Dantè’s Wings into more schools and communities, offering educational talks, parent support groups, and awareness drives around ADHD and emotional wellbeing. She also intends to continue collaborating with local charities and empowering women through service.

Beyond her reign, Chantell’s vision is clear. “I want to keep using my voice — through public speaking, writing, and community leadership,” she says. “My goal is to build a legacy of kindness, courage, and hope that outlives any title.”

# Forever Fit Box

**Quinton and Songezo did not plan for their fitness journey to unfold the way it did, but both agree that the challenges they faced helped shape the heart of Forever Fit Box.**

**“I’ve always been part of the fitness industry,” Quinton says. “Long before my time at Ignite Fitness, I knew this was what I wanted to do. Working there shaped me as a coach and taught me a lot about the industry, but the dream was always to open my own gym one day.” When the Covid pandemic disrupted the world, that dream did not disappear. Instead, it changed direction and slowly grew into what is now Forever Fit Box. Songezo, an entrepreneur and fitness enthusiast, shares the same passion for healthy living. “I believe in the transformative power of health and fitness,” Songezo says. That belief would later become one of the driving forces behind their partnership.**

**Quinton’s path as a personal trainer started with a simple desire to help people improve their lives. “My journey started through my deep involvement in the fitness industry and my passion for helping people change their lives through movement and discipline,” he explains. When lockdowns hit and gyms closed, he had to think fast. “Opening a home gym through QMK Coaching became a way to continue doing the job I loved, support my family, and keep my purpose alive, even with very limited equipment.”**

**The pandemic placed enormous pressure on the fitness industry. “Gyms were the last to reopen, and we went months without income,” Quinton says. A restructuring at Ignite Fitness led to pay cuts that made it impossible for him to provide for his family. “We had to find other ways to survive, including running a food distribution company and relying on my wife’s job to keep us afloat.”**

**Despite the uncertainty, quitting was never an option. “The motivation came from my family, my faith, and the belief that this was what I was called to do,” Quinton says.**

#Fitness

# Interview with Quinton and Songezo

## Creating Healthy Habits Through Fitness

Despite the uncertainty, quitting was never an option. “The motivation came from my family, my faith, and the belief that this was what I was called to do,” Quinton says. He trained at home every day and shared workouts online. “It was the only way I could lead by example and build trust. I kept people motivated with home video training and challenges.” That consistency helped him gain his first clients through QMK Coaching.

Songezo first met Quinton as a gym member. “I watched the way he trained his clients. He always went the extra mile and the passion showed in the results,” Songezo says. After becoming one of Quinton’s clients, he quickly noticed changes in his own fitness. “Over time we built a friendship over the way we saw not just fitness but life and the world.” Joining forces felt natural. “Having experienced firsthand how effective and enjoyable Quinton’s coaching was, partnering up was something that excited me.”

About two years after QMK Coaching began, the two realized they were building more than a client base. “We saw that it was more than just friendship,” Quinton says. “It was a shared vision.” They prayed about the next step and decided to move forward in January 2023. “We registered, started looking for premises, and everything just aligned,” Songezo adds. By February they were setting up the gym, and in March 2023, Forever Fit Box officially opened its doors.

Today, the gym’s mission goes beyond physical training. “Our mission is to build people in mind, body, and soul by creating healthy habits through fitness, rest, and balance,” Quinton explains. “We want to help people become the best version of themselves in all areas of life.”

Community plays a central role. “This is more than a gym, it’s a family,” Songezo says. Members encourage one another, celebrate progress, and build real connections. The gym also creates opportunities for other trainers. “We help personal trainers grow their businesses in our facility and mentor them along the way,” Quinton says.

One of their proudest achievements is watching members grow in confidence. “Seeing someone go from struggling to show up, to being consistent and supporting others, is incredible,” Songezo says. Their athletes have also performed well in competitions. “Last year our athletes placed first, second, and third in various fitness competitions in Port Elizabeth,” Quinton says. “Some also competed at Hyrox Cape Town and achieved excellent times. We’re proud of how our coaches show up for their members.” What sets Forever Fit Box apart, they believe, is their people-first approach. “We build relationships before revenue,” Quinton says. “We create accountability and coach with genuine care. We focus on long-term growth, not quick results.” Running a gym is not easy. “The biggest challenge is time,” Songezo admits. “It’s long hours and long days, but we support each other every step of the way.” Both credit their wives as their biggest supporters.

**Balancing friendship and business requires effort. “We do it through mutual respect, honest communication, and a shared vision,” Quinton says. “We know when to be business partners and when to just be friends.”**

For aspiring fitness entrepreneurs, their advice is simple. “Never give up. Stay humble. Work hard and be prepared for long hours,” Songezo says. Quinton adds, “Build relationships before focusing on money. If you genuinely care about people and stay committed to your vision, the community will grow naturally. Focus on mind, body, and soul, and always seek God in everything you do.”.

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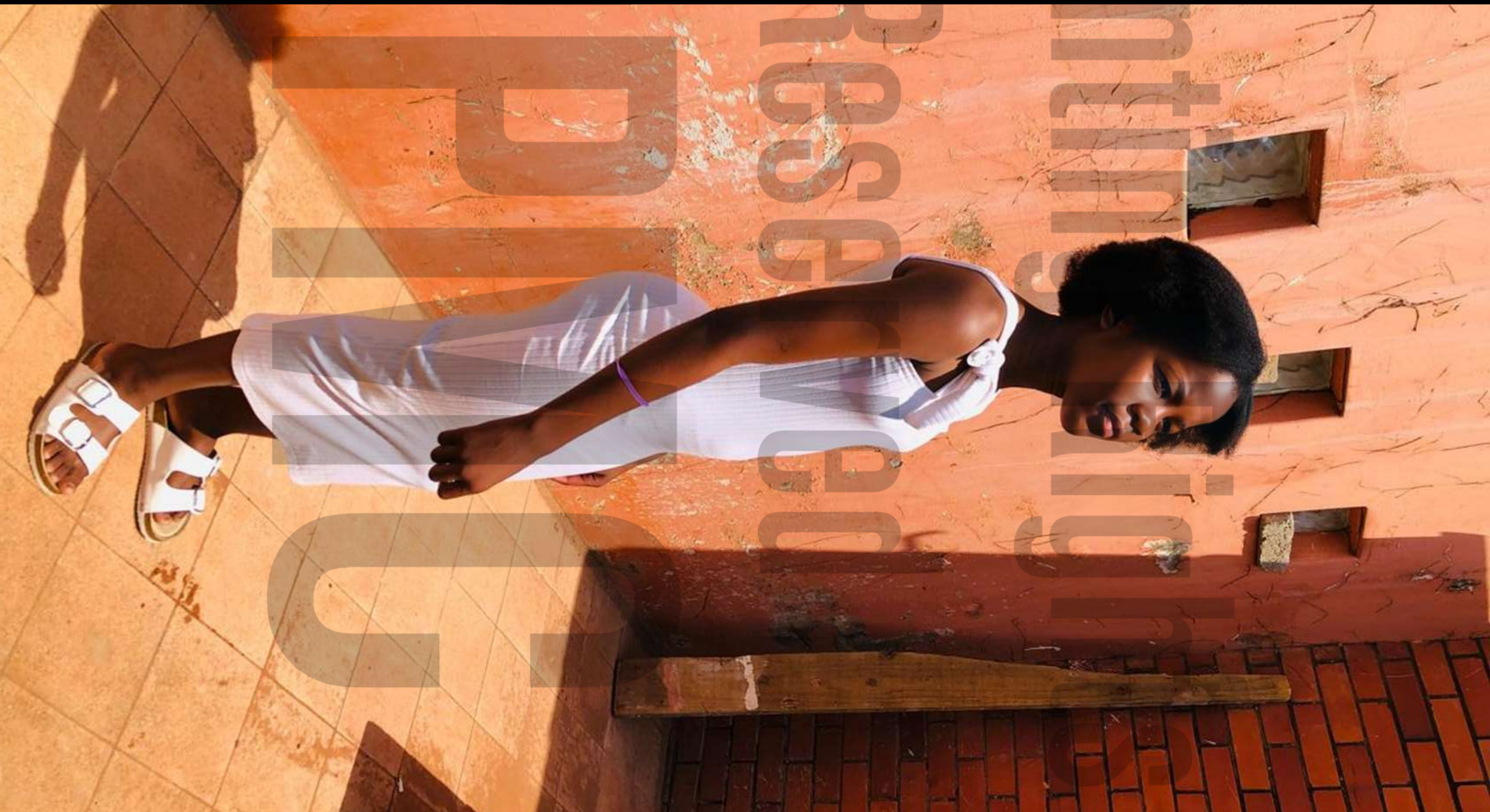
# Durban Model Search 2026 Finalist

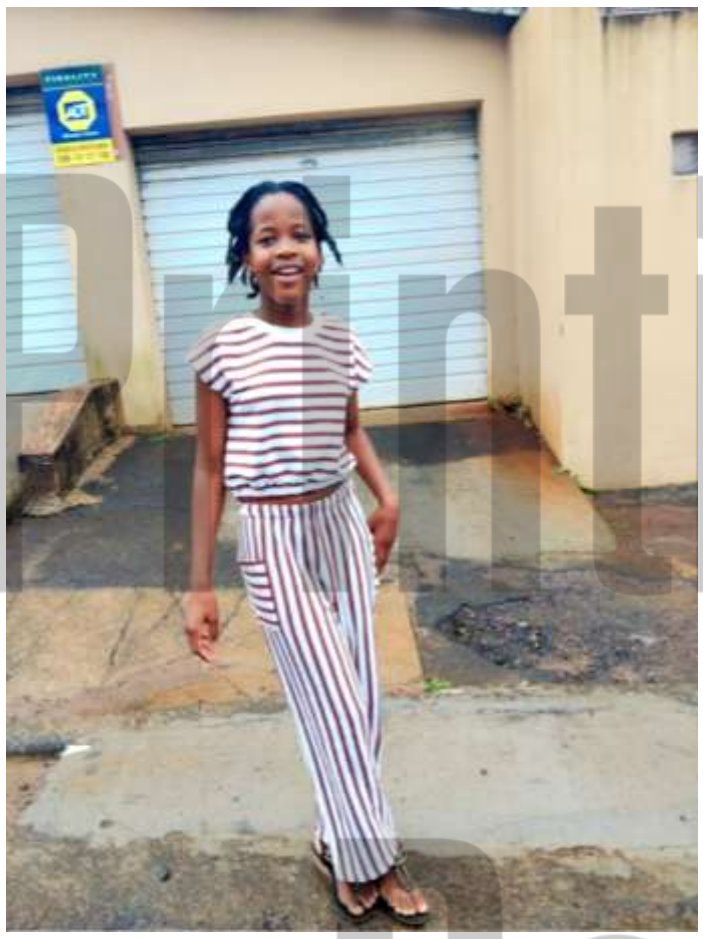
*Lerato Thango*



#Model

# Interview with Lerato Thango

## Durban Model Search 2026 Finalist



Lerato Thango is making her mark in the modeling world at just 11 years old. From Durban Montclair, Lerato is in grade six and describes herself as a people person who loves meeting and working with different people. “I love modeling,” she says simply, her excitement clear in every word.

When Lerato found out she had been selected as a finalist for the Durban Model Search 2026, she couldn’t hide her joy. “That was the best news I ever heard this year. I have been trying to enter the modeling industry with no luck,” she recalls. Her persistence and passion have finally started to pay off.

Lerato says her decision to enter the competition came naturally. “I am a model by nature. I have been modeling for church and also for my community,” she explains. From an early age, she found herself drawn to performing and presenting in front of people.

Her journey into modeling has been filled with small steps that built her confidence and love for the craft. “I have been entering church competitions and have been enjoying modeling since childhood,” Lerato says. These experiences taught her the basics of poise, presentation, and self-expression, all of which have helped her shine in bigger competitions like the Durban Model Search.

Being part of the Durban Model Search has been an exciting experience for Lerato. “To be on board and to be able to participate in this competition is amazing,” she says. The opportunity to meet other young models and learn from professionals has given her a taste of the industry’s demands and rewards.

Like many young models, Lerato has faced challenges along the way. She points out that social media has been a hurdle for some members of her community. “Most people in my community are not used to Instagram. It is difficult for them to partake in social media. Next time, I would like to urge judges to also make use of other platforms like Facebook,” she says. Despite this, Lerato’s determination has never wavered.

The competition has also helped her grow as a person. “Yes, as young as I am, I could take part in this competition,” Lerato says. The experience has shown her that age is not a barrier when it comes to pursuing your dreams.

Looking ahead, Lerato has big plans for her future in modeling. She sees herself growing in the industry, whether on the runway, in commercial work, editorial shoots, or pageants. “Yes, I would like to grow in this industry,” she says with confidence.

Behind every young model is usually a strong support system, and Lerato’s biggest supporter is her mother. “My mother, she has been my pillar of strength, my shoulder to cry on. She has been supporting me ever since this dream bloomed in me,” Lerato says. Her mother’s guidance has been invaluable, from preparing for castings to offering advice before runway walks and photo shoots.

Lerato has learned a lot about the modeling industry that has surprised her. She has discovered how much hard work, patience, and dedication are required. Preparation is key, and she always follows her mother’s guidance. “My mother always advises me in everything,” Lerato says.

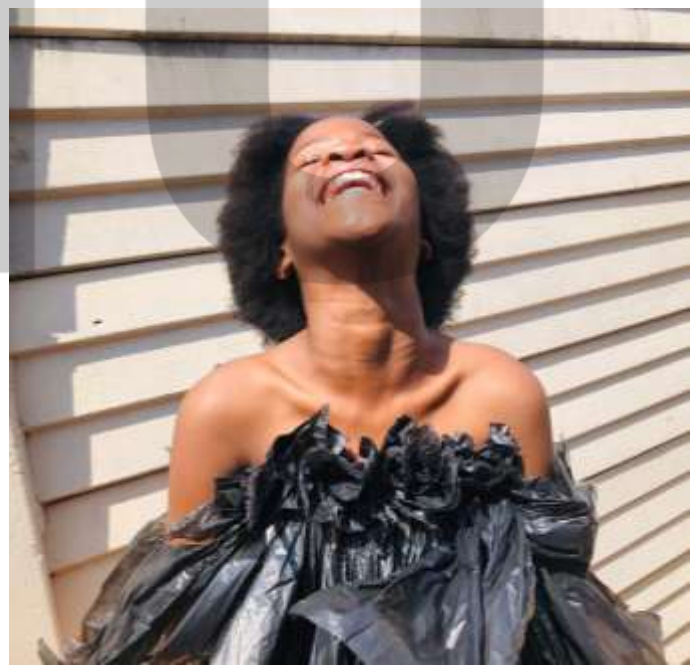
When asked what makes her stand out from the other finalists, Lerato is confident. “I am a young, bright, shining star who is ready to shake things up in the modeling industry,” she says. Her energy, determination, and willingness to learn give her an edge in a competitive field.

Winning the Durban Model Search 2026 would be a major milestone for Lerato. “It would be a big breakthrough for my career,” she explains. Her ultimate dream is simple but powerful: “To take part and win.”

For young people who are hesitant to enter competitions, Lerato has advice based on her own journey. “Everything is possible,” she says. Her words reflect a deep belief in chasing dreams and never giving up, no matter the obstacles.

At just 11 years old, Lerato Thango is already showing the qualities of a young model with a bright future. With the support of her mother, a natural flair for modeling, and a determination to succeed, she is one to watch in the Durban Model Search 2026. Whether on the runway, in front of a camera, or representing her community, Lerato is ready to make her mark and inspire other young people to follow their dreams.

Her story is not just about modeling; it is about courage, growth, and believing in yourself. “I love meeting people and working with different people,” she says. And with that mindset, Lerato is certain to continue turning heads and capturing hearts wherever her journey takes her next.



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# Cyanne Greydenstein

PPMC MAGAZINE ISSUE 168

*Stage Confidence Speaks Without Words*

#Model

# Meet Cyanne Greyvenstein

## Modeling and Cheerleading

Cyanne Greyvenstein is making her mark in modeling with real passion and hard work. She has always loved performing and expressing herself creatively. The more classes she attended, the more she fell in love with modeling. “I’ve always loved performing and expressing myself creatively,” Cyanne says.

**“The more classes I attended the more I fell in love with modeling. What keeps me passionate at it is every competition teaches me something new about myself and I enjoy inspiring other young girls to believe in themselves.”**

Her first competition brought a mix of emotions. “It was emotional and exciting at the same time,” she recalls. “I felt proud of the hard work I put in. It motivated me to train even harder because I realized I’m capable of reaching higher goals if I stay focused and consistent.”

What stood out most was meeting people from different backgrounds who shared her passion. “Meeting people from different backgrounds who shared the same passion as me stood out for sure,” Cyanne explains. “I learned that modeling isn’t just about your appearance, it’s about attitude, discipline and how you treat others. It helped me grow as a person, not just a model.”

**Cyanne loves the runway category best. “Runway because it reflects your confidence and training,” she states. “When I walked and felt in control and comfortable on stage, it showed me how far I’ve come.”**

To prepare, she put in serious effort. “I practiced a lot, watched a lot of videos of professional models, worked on fitness, accepted feedback, worked on my posture, turns and facial expressions,” she shares. Competitions have shown her that modeling goes beyond the walk. “It showed my personality and stage presence in so many ways, not just my walk,” she says. “I enjoyed connecting with the audience and judges, and it reminded me that modeling is also about energy and good vibes.”

Representing others carries weight for Cyanne. “It means responsibility and pride,” she notes. “I represent not only myself and my agency but my community. It motivates me to be disciplined, respectful and hardworking because others look up to me.”

**Besides modeling, Cyanne enjoys cheerleading. “I love performing and teamwork, so cheerleading felt like the perfect fit,” she says. “I’m excited about learning new skills, building school spirit and growing stronger physically and mentally.”**

She focuses on hip hop style right now. “I’m focusing on hip hop as that is the style I’m learning,” Cyanne explains. “I train by practicing routines regularly, and stretching.” Time management keeps everything balanced. “I plan my schedule weekly and make sure school comes first,” she says. “I train after I do my homework and keep a healthy routine. Staying organized helps me avoid stress and keeps me motivated.”

**Her biggest inspirations come from close supporters. “My family inspires me because they support me and remind me to stay humble, motivated and positive,” she shares. “I’m also inspired by my coach, Aunty Gail and Teacher Cayleigh, who works so hard to help us succeed.”**

The highlight for Cyanne is stepping on stage. “My favorite part is the moment I step onto the stage and connect with the audience,” she reveals. “It feels powerful because I can express confidence without speaking.”

Looking ahead, Cyanne has clear goals. “My biggest goals are to grow, gain more experience and improve my performance quality and the way I walk, do my turns and my posture,” she says. “Of course, I want high scores but most importantly I want to show confidence, professionalism and represent my province and modeling agency proudly.”

Cyanne attends Framesby High School and trains with Sophisticate Models. She started modeling in 2024 and quickly earned strong results, including placing third in Top Model of the Year that year and winning debutant honors later with high sponsorship value.

Her achievements in events like Talent Africa Nationals, with top scores in fitness, casual, high fashion, and formal categories, show how fast she is rising in South African modeling. Cyanne keeps pushing forward, balancing school, training, and her drive to inspire others along the way.

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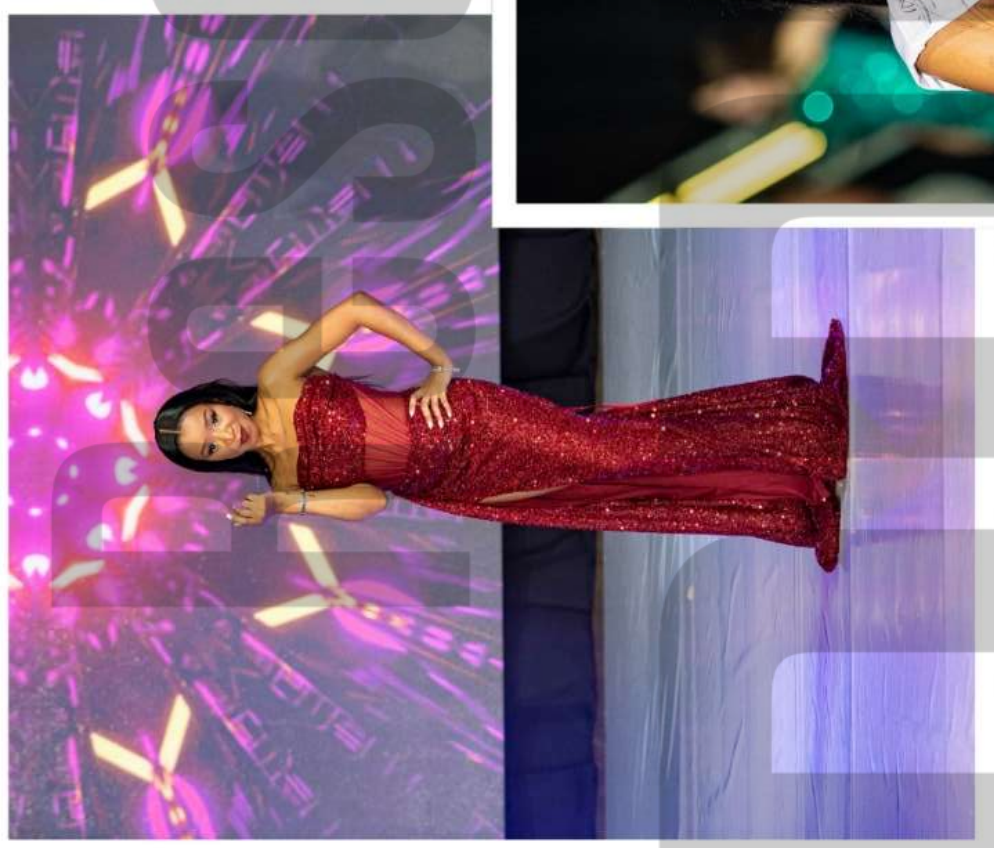
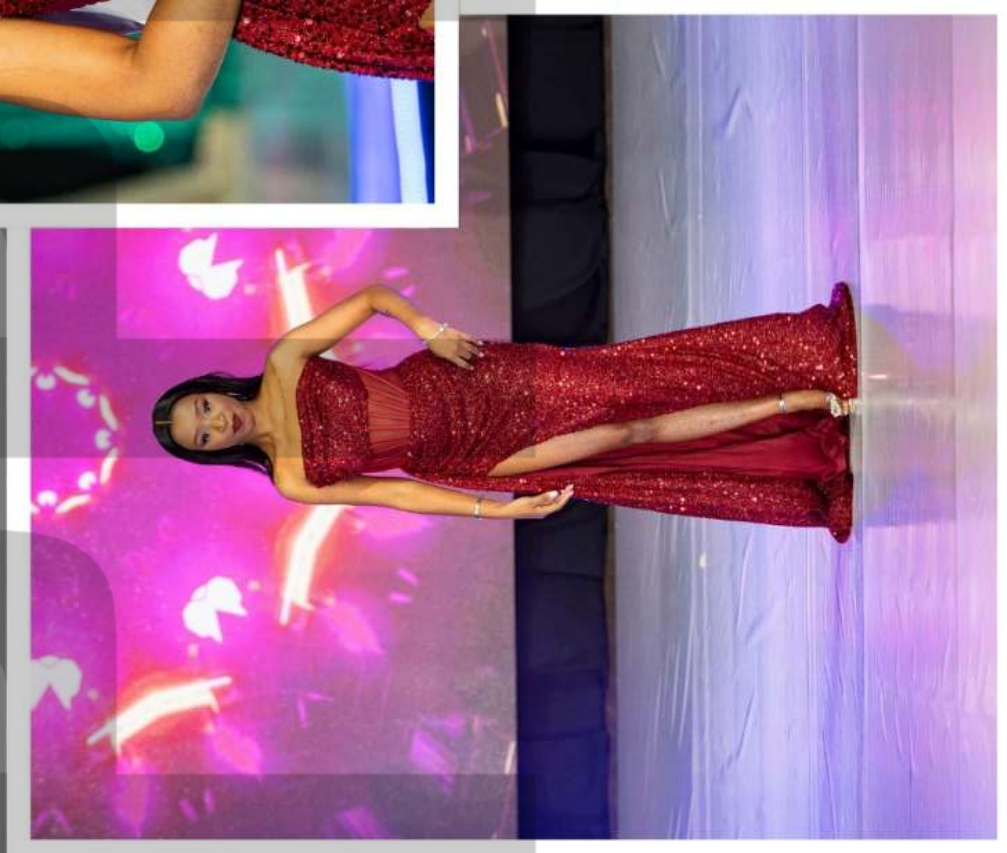
# Yuki Manjate - Provincial Mpumalanga MS 1st Runner-up 2025

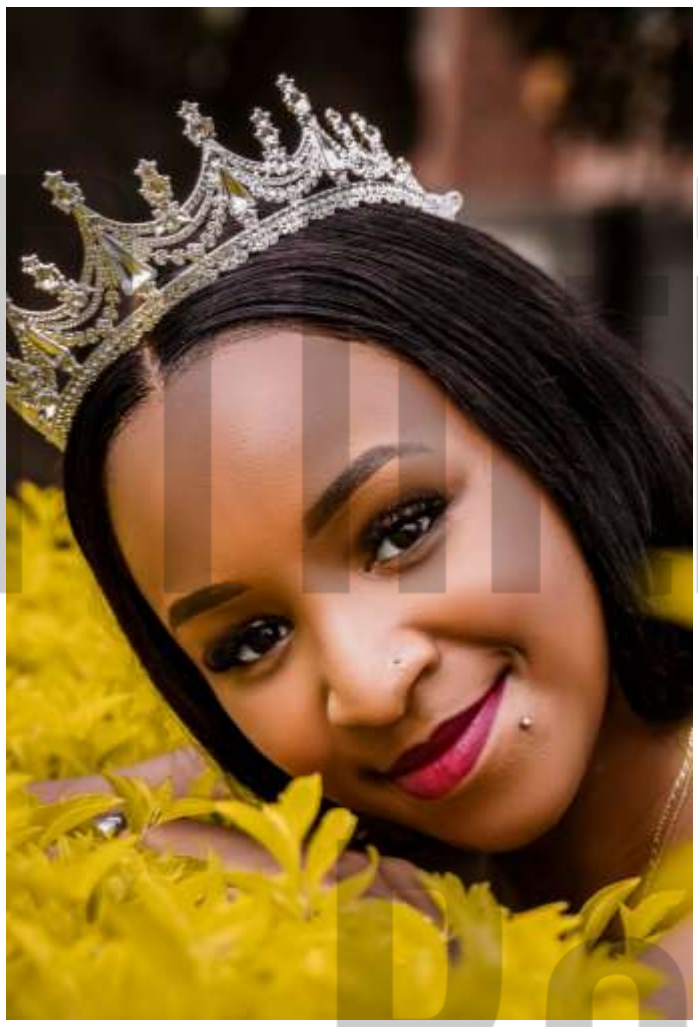




#Finalist

# Interview with Yuki Manjate

## Provincial Mpumalanga MS 1st Runner-up 2025



When Yuki's name was announced as Provincial Mpumalanga MS 1st Runner-up 2025, time seemed to stand still. "I had a rush of emotions," Yuki says with a smile. "It felt surreal. I was over the moon." For Yuki, this was more than just a sash and a title. It was her first official win after years in the pageant space. "It was my very first time winning a title in the pageant world, even though this was not my first pageant journey. I started in primary school. So, accomplishing this felt like a big win and made me feel very proud of myself."

Yuki entered the Provincial Mpumalanga MS competition with a clear intention. She understood the impact pageants can have on personal growth. "Due to the knowledge I have about pageants and how much power they hold when it comes to the self, I knew this was the perfect opportunity for me to work on myself," she explains. At the time, she was facing personal challenges. "I was going through a very rough patch in my life and I needed something that could keep me busy and help me find myself and find purpose again. I knew joining the pageant was the perfect fit."

The road to the crown was not easy. Yuki speaks openly about the reality behind the glamour. "In all honesty, the journey wasn't as easy as it looked. It was challenging and messy at times." While serving as a finalist, she was dealing with personal struggles behind the scenes. "During my time as a finalist, I was going through a lot in my life, and somehow I managed to pull through." Through it all, she found growth. "I managed to find beauty in the midst of all the chaos.

I grew so much as an individual. I started finding my identity, learning more about myself and reconnecting with my purpose. I had almost let go of it." Looking back, she says every moment mattered. "The journey was all worth it. The good and the difficult times. I am grateful because I am who I am today because of those difficult times."

Representing Mpumalanga carries deep meaning for Yuki. "It means being able to show other women that there is more than just perfection and physical beauty," she says. "Imperfection is beauty. Authenticity is beauty. The raw you is beauty." She sees herself as a voice for women who may feel unseen. "It means being a role model who is not afraid to use her voice, to speak on her story and to inspire others. A role model who stands for what she advocates for, even the stigmatized."

Preparation for the competition required a mental shift. "I knew it would require a lot of my time, strength and focus," Yuki explains. "So I made a mind shift. I adjusted my way of thinking and my expectations." As someone who describes herself as a people pleaser, she had to learn to prioritise her own well-being. "I told myself to always put me first, especially in times where I had burnout. It is so important to pause, put yourself first and care for yourself in order to move forward."

Yuki believes her confidence helped her stand out. "I believe it was my confidence and my ability to stand out in everything that I did. From my presence during the journey to my stage presence in front of the judging panel." Still, there were practical challenges. Transport was one of her biggest obstacles. "My biggest challenge was getting around to events, charity functions and meetings. But somehow, by the grace of God, I made it work." She relied on a cab driver to help her attend commitments. "It cost me a lot but it was all worth it and I do not regret it." The experience motivated her to work towards owning her own car. "I am grateful for the challenges because they pushed me to take steps to better my day-to-day life."

When asked about her biggest supporter, Yuki pauses. "Although I had a few people cheering for me, at the end of the day I feel that I was my biggest supporter from start to finish," she says honestly. "I faced a lot of challenges to the point that I almost quit, but I pulled myself through." While grateful for those who helped along the way, she recognises her own strength. "From start to finish, it was all me."

The personal growth she experienced is clear. "I definitely started to learn how to love myself, how to love Yuki as a whole, flaws and all," she says. "I never liked what I saw in the mirror, but now I love what I see. I am proud because I do not only see what is on the outside, but on the inside as well."

Even as first runner-up, Yuki feels like a winner. "I still feel like I won the crown," she says. Her main focus is mental health. "My initiative is mental health. Mental health is health." As someone studying towards a degree in psychology, this cause is close to her heart. Balancing pageantry with work, studies and motherhood requires discipline. "My diary has been my best friend," Yuki laughs. "Before, I used to go with the flow, but that did not work."

Looking ahead to 2026, Yuki plans to continue serving her community and completing her psychology degree. She is also pursuing modelling. "I love the camera. I feel most confident in front of it. Some say I am a natural." Her dream is clear. "At the end of it all, I strive to be a successful psychologist and professional model. Who said I cannot do both?"

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#Inspire

# Interview with Kyra KiKi Naidoo

## Role Model National SA LGBTQI Queen 2025/26

**Kyra KiKi Naidoo speaks with calm confidence when she introduces herself. “My name is Kyra KiKi Naidoo, and I am proudly the reigning Role Model National South Africa LGBTQI Queen 2025/2026,” she says with a smile. Kyra is a transgender woman, an HR graduate, an accredited assessor, moderator, and facilitator, as well as a passionate actress. Above all, she is an advocate for inclusivity, education, and empowerment. “My journey has been about choosing authenticity over fear and purpose over limitation,” she explains. “I decided that my life would be guided by truth, not by what others expected of me.”**

**Kyra grew up in Durban, in Chatsworth, a community she describes as rich in culture and strong family values. “Chatsworth shaped me in many ways,” she says. “It taught me about identity, tradition, and community.” As a child, Kyra did not yet have the language to fully express who she was. She was seen as male and later identified as gay. “For a long time, I carried an internal knowing that there was more to my truth,” she shares. “But I needed maturity and self-reflection to understand it.”**

Facebook: @Kyra KiKi Naidoo
Instagram: @kyra_kiki_naidoo
LinkedIn: @kyrakiki-hrprofessional
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**At the age of 30, after extensive research and deep soul-searching, Kyra made the life-changing decision to transition. “It was terrifying and incredibly liberating at the same time,” she says honestly. “From that moment, I knew I was finally choosing myself.” Coming out and living authentically was not without challenges. There were moments of fear, uncertainty, and social pressure. Yet Kyra remained focused on living fully in her truth. “I realized that my peace was more important than fitting into a box that was never meant for me,” she says.**

**Over the past year, Kyra stepped boldly into the world of pageantry. For her, it was more than just competition. “Pageantry felt like a natural extension of my purpose,” she explains. “It’s not just about crowns or titles. It’s about representation, visibility, and impact.”**

She chose to enter pageants that celebrate diversity and empowerment because she believes transgender women belong in these spaces. “We are not exceptions,” she says firmly. “We are leaders and role models.”

Kyra credits her family, friends, and community for encouraging her to take that step, “Their belief in me gave me the confidence to own my story and compete unapologetically,” she says. “I want to thank Nirvana Duwarika CEO of Role Model National South Africa for creating a platform where women like me can be seen, heard, and celebrated.”

One of her earliest recognitions came when she was named Second Princess at the Phoenix Fair Pageant on 10 June 2025. Despite years of stage experience through theatre and Bollywood dance, pageantry brought a new kind of pressure.

“I was incredibly nervous,” Kyra admits. “But when I stepped onto the stage and heard the crowd cheering, something shifted. I trusted myself, especially during the Q&A, and I owned my truth.”

A month later, Kyra entered the Chatsworth Drag Queen pageant on 27th July 2025, a decision that carried personal meaning. As a transgender woman, she approached the space with respect and intention. “Chatsworth is home,” she says. “Representing my community mattered deeply to me.”

Her talent performance, an original short play titled I Forgive You, But I Choose Me, left a lasting impression. The story followed a child who loved to dance but grew up misunderstood, eventually choosing self-acceptance. “It reflected the lived reality of so many LGBTQIA+ people,” Kyra explains. When she was crowned Chatsworth Drag Queen 2025, the moment went far beyond celebration. “What mattered most was knowing the message reached someone,” she says.

Each experience strengthened her confidence and purpose, preparing her for the defining moment of her career: the Role Model National South Africa pageant on 6 December 2025 at the Blue Waters Hotel, where she was crowned LGBTQIA+ Queen for the 2025–2026 reign. Preparation was intense and deeply intentional. “I knew I had to be fully committed,” she says. “My talent piece was a short original play entitled ‘The Child I Could Not Birth,’” Kyra says, and her voice softens as she speaks about it. This was not just a performance. It was the emotional heart of her journey on stage.

The play told the story of a transgender woman deeply in love, bravely navigating a relationship with a man whose deeply religious parents could not accept her. Their rejection was sharp and painful. Through ridicule and heartbreak, the character is forced to confront a powerful question: does she bend herself to win approval, or does she stand firm in her truth? “At its core, the story is about choosing yourself,” Kyra explains. “It’s about understanding that your worth is not up for debate.”

In the midst of that emotional struggle, the character encounters an abandoned child. It becomes a turning point. Though she cannot biologically have children of her own, she discovers that motherhood is not defined by biology alone. It is defined by love, care, protection, and presence. She realizes she can nurture, love, and guide a child in her own way.

**“The message is simple but powerful,” Kyra says. “Just because society says you cannot give birth does not mean you cannot give love. And love is what truly makes a mother.”**

The performance explored themes of rejection, faith, identity, and the silent grief that many transgender women carry. But its message reaches far beyond one community. It speaks to all women — including those living with PCOS, infertility, medical challenges, or circumstances that make pregnancy difficult or impossible.

Motherhood is not defined solely by biology. It is defined by love, nurture, sacrifice, and devotion. Whether through adoption, fostering, mentorship, community care, or simply the unconditional love a woman gives — the essence of being a mother lives in the heart, not just the womb. More than anything, the performance celebrated choice — the choice to live authentically, to love fully, and to create family in ways that may not look traditional, but are just as real, just as valid, and just as meaningful.

The evening itself was a whirlwind, from the walks to the question-and-answer segment, and the opportunity to be judged by a star-studded panel. When her name was finally called as the winner, Kyra felt a flood of emotion. “It was surreal,” she recalls. “In that moment, I felt seen, affirmed, and proud.”

Kyra sees pageantry as a powerful tool for advocacy in South Africa. While progress has been made for transgender visibility, challenges like stigma and limited representation remain. “Pageants offer a platform to challenge stereotypes and celebrate diversity,” she explains. “Every time I step on stage, I am showing that transgender women deserve to be seen, heard, and valued.”

Looking ahead to 2026, Kyra has set her sights on bold and meaningful goals centred around community impact. Her primary focus is giving back — particularly supporting youth and LGBTQIA+ individuals who need encouragement, representation, and safe spaces to thrive.

Deeply passionate about charity work, she plans to champion animal welfare drives, uplift underprivileged communities, and continue supporting children and the elderly through organisations such as ABH/Cheshire Homes.

“Community is everything,” she says. “When we come together with love and purpose, real change happens.” Beyond her advocacy, Kyra intends to expand her presence in film, theatre, and media, continuing to use storytelling as a powerful tool for visibility and empowerment. A deeply personal part of her journey also includes pursuing gender-affirming surgery and facial feminization surgery, aligning her outer reflection with her authentic self.

**“Embracing your truth can change lives,” she shares. “Not just your own, but the lives of others who see themselves in your story.”**

# Blessing Matlakala

EPMC MAGAZINE ISSUE 168

*Celebrating Diversity and Dreams*

#Pageant

# Interview with Blessing Matlakala

## Miss Glamor Legacy South Africa 2025 Teen

Blessing Matlakala, a 14-year-old student at Hulwazi Secondary School in Daveyton, Benoni, is passionate about promoting diversity and inclusivity. “I believe every individual is unique, with their own experiences and preferences,” she says. “It’s essential to break free from narrow expectations and celebrate our differences, creating a world where everyone feels seen, heard, and valued.”

Blessing’s journey into pageantry began when she joined Miss Glamor Legacy South Africa 2025. “Their mission and vision aligned perfectly with my advocacy,” she explains. “Participating in the pageant gave me a platform to raise awareness about diversity and inclusivity and make a positive impact in my community. The organization’s commitment to empowering young people and promoting positive change resonated deeply with me.”

Her dedication paid off. Blessing won the Miss Glamor Legacy Limpopo Queen title, and she was crowned National Miss Glamor Legacy South Africa 1st Runner-Up, also receiving the Congeniality award. “Being called on stage and knowing that all my hard work had paid off was unforgettable,” she says. “It was a moment of validation, not just for me, but for my family, friends, and community who supported me throughout this journey.”

While the experience was rewarding, Blessing faced challenges along the way. “One of the hardest parts was interacting on social media without a cellphone,” she admits. “It limited my ability to engage with the pageant community and share my story. But with the help of my parents, who acted as my social media managers, I was able to overcome it and still make a meaningful impact.”

Beyond the competition itself, Blessing values the friendships and connections she made. “Building a sisterly relationship with the other contestants and directors was a highlight. Interacting with people from different backgrounds has broadened my understanding of the world and reinforced my commitment to promoting diversity and inclusivity,” she says.

She also credits her coach for guiding her through the process. “Carola was an absolute blessing. She was incredibly patient during rehearsals and helped me grow not only as a contestant but also as a person. She went above and beyond, helping me with public speaking and becoming like a sister to me. Her support gave me the confidence to push myself and be the best version of myself.”

Pageantry has given Blessing more than titles and awards; it has strengthened her personal growth. “The experience boosted my confidence, gave me a voice, and taught me the importance of using it effectively,” she reflects. “Having a voice is not just about speaking, but also about listening, empathizing, and inspiring others.”

When asked how she prepares before going on stage, Blessing shares, “I hfocus on being calm, confident, and present. I remind myself that my uniqueness is my strength. Visualization and practice help me feel ready to give my best performance.”

Wearing her crown and sash is deeply meaningful. “It’s a reminder of the responsibility I have to inspire others and promote positive change,” she explains. “I want to use my title to make a difference in my community and encourage others to embrace their individuality.”

Blessing has already begun using her platform to advocate for inclusivity. “I engage with schools and community programs, sharing messages about diversity and empowerment. Social media also allows me to reach a wider audience and inspire young people to celebrate their differences,” she says.

To young girls who dream of entering pageants but feel unsure, Blessing offers heartfelt advice: “Don’t let shyness hold you back. Believe in yourself and remember that your uniqueness is a strength. Speak up, share your story, and inspire others. Celebrate who you are and never apologize for it.”

Looking ahead, Blessing remains committed to her mission. “As my reign comes to an end, my vision remains unchanged. I will continue empowering, inspiring, and uplifting my community and schools. Every young person deserves access to opportunities, resources, and support to reach their full potential. This is not the end of my journey, but a new chapter in my advocacy, and I’m excited for what’s next,” she says.

With her dedication, courage, and focus on inclusivity, Blessing Matlakala is a young leader making her mark, proving that pageantry can be more than beauty—it can be a platform to empower and inspire a generation.

# Miss Shine On EC 2025 Queen

*Yondi Nqeketo*

#Pageant

# Interview with Yondi Nqeketo

## Miss Shine On Eastern Cape 2025 Queen

In the heart of the Eastern Cape, in Ngqeleni's Mqwangqweni Location, an 18-year-old named Yondi Nqeketo is working hard to turn her dreams into reality. Yondi is completing her final year of high school, known as matric, while chasing a career as a model. She wants to succeed in the fashion world and show others that they can follow their own paths.

"My name is Yondi Nqeketo, an 18-year-old aspiring model born and raised in Ngqeleni, Mqwangqweni Location," she says. "I am currently completing my matric year, while passionately pursuing my dream of becoming a successful model and an inspiration to others."

Yondi's entry into modeling stands out because she did it on her own terms. No talent scouts or famous contacts pointed her in that direction. She made the choice herself because of her deep love for the field and her wish to rise above her circumstances. Yondi wanted to become someone positive in her community. "I wanted to prove that where you come from does not determine where you can go," Yondi explains.

The road has been tough for Yondi. At first, she received no emotional or financial help from her mother. That left her to cover all the costs by herself. She paid for entry fees into competitions and all the preparation needed, such as outfits and training. Taking on these duties alone taught Yondi important lessons about commitment and self-belief. "These challenges shaped me and strengthened my character, and made my story different from many others," Yondi notes.

So far, Yondi has taken part in just one major event. She entered the Miss Shine On Eastern Cape, a provincial pageant. Even though it was her very first time on a big stage like that, Yondi came away with two titles. That achievement changed things for her.

"That moment marked a turning point in my life," says Yondi. After her family saw how hard she worked and the success she earned, her mother started to back her modeling efforts. Today, Yondi moves forward with clear purpose and strong ambition. She keeps her focus on building a name for herself in modeling. At the same time, she hopes to serve as a guide for other young people.

Her main aim goes beyond personal success. Yondi wants to reach out to girls who grow up in difficult situations. She encourages them to trust their abilities and put in the effort needed to achieve what they want. "My goal is not only to succeed in the modeling industry but also to inspire young girls from disadvantaged backgrounds to believe in themselves, work hard, and pursue their dreams regardless of the obstacles they face," Yondi states.

Yondi's story begins in a place where opportunities can seem limited. Ngqeleni is a rural area where many young people face daily struggles. Yet from a young age, Yondi looked at the world with bigger ideas. She spent time looking at fashion images and imagining herself in that creative space. Without any outside push, she decided to take steps on her own.

When she first told her family about her plans, the response was not what she hoped for. Her mother had concerns about the costs and the uncertain future in modeling. Yondi did not let that stop her. She found ways to save money and prepare as best she could.

For the Miss Shine On Eastern Cape competition, Yondi handled every detail. She practiced her walk, prepared her answers for interview sections, and made sure she presented herself well. The effort paid off when judges recognized her talent with two crowns. Winning those titles brought more than just awards. It opened a new chapter at home. Yondi's mother saw the results of her daughter's hard work and began to offer support. This shift has given Yondi extra energy to keep going.

As she finishes her school year, Yondi balances study time with her modeling activities. She knows education remains important while she builds toward her goals. Friends and teachers have started to notice her drive. Yondi often thinks about other girls in her community who might have similar dreams but feel held back by their situations. She wants her experiences to show them a different picture. "You can create change for yourself," she believes.

In conversations, Yondi speaks with quiet confidence about the future. She plans to enter more pageants and look for modeling jobs. Each step builds on the last. She remains open to learning new skills in posing, photography, and public speaking.

Her community plays a big role in her thinking. Yondi hopes that one day she can return to Ngqeleni and Mqwangqweni to share her knowledge. Workshops for young people could help them explore their own interests.

For now, Yondi keeps her daily routine focused. Schoolwork comes first each day, followed by any modeling practice she can fit in. She stays in touch with organizers from her recent pageant for advice on next moves.

Yondi Nqeketo's path offers a clear message. Starting from a small location in the Eastern Cape, she has shown what personal effort can achieve. With her mother now on her side, Yondi looks ahead with excitement. Her story continues to develop, one determined step at a time.

Reserved

Awethu Mkentane

#Model

# Interview with Awethu Mkentane

## Fashion, Justice and Education First

Awethu Mkentane laughs when asked when fashion first entered his life. “I knew I loved fashion from a young age, man,” Awethu says. “I was always the one with the wildest outfits, mixing and matching everything to create something new. Style became my playground.” For Awethu, clothes were never just fabric. They were a way to speak before saying a word.

One of his earliest memories still makes him smile. “I remember taking my sisters’ clothes, turning a long T-shirt into a dress, wearing their heels, and modelling in the house,” Awethu says. “Playing dress up made me feel like a star and sparked my creativity.” While other children were playing outside, Awethu was busy creating looks in the bedroom mirror, building confidence one outfit at a time.

Not everyone understood it at first. “My mom would ask, ‘What are you wearing, my child?’” Awethu says with a grin. “But my sister and family said they loved it.” That support made a difference. “Their support made me feel confident and unapologetically myself, pushing me to experiment more.” Instead of shrinking, Awethu grew bolder, learning early that approval from the right people can shape a young dreamer into a determined creative.

By 2024, those childhood games turned into real opportunities. Awethu was featured in magazines for his modelling work, something he still describes as surreal. “Being in magazines in 2024 was insane,” Awethu says. “It felt like a dream come true, validating my hard work and inspiring me to keep pushing for my own fashion brand that celebrates African culture.” Seeing his name in print was not just about fame. It was proof that passion and persistence can open doors.

But the journey has not been perfect. Awethu speaks openly about a difficult lesson. “I felt torn and ended up failing my final exams because I focused too much on modelling,” Awethu admits. “I learned that school is the foundation. Education gives you opportunities even in modelling.” Now repeating the class, Awethu carries that lesson with maturity. “I’m advising others to balance both, but prioritize education,” Awethu says.

Education, for Awethu, is not separate from fashion. It is part of it. “Education gives you the tools to manage your career smartly, understand contracts, build a personal brand, and stay empowered beyond the runway,” Awethu explains. “It also opens doors for other opportunities if the modelling scene shifts.” He now approaches both school and modelling with structure and discipline.

Balancing the two requires planning. “Balancing school and modelling needs solid time management,” Awethu says. “Set a strict schedule, prioritize assignments, use downtime between shoots for studying, and keep open communication with teachers and agents about your commitments.” It is advice born from experience.

At the heart of Awethu’s journey is identity. “Being unapologetically yourself means embracing your true identity, values, and style without seeking approval,” Awethu says. “You live it by expressing your authentic voice in every choice and refusing to dilute your uniqueness to fit others’ expectations.” It is a mindset that shapes how Awethu walks, dresses, studies, and dreams.

Empowering young women is central to Awethu’s mission. “Know your worth and own your story,” Awethu says firmly. “Set small, achievable goals. Surround yourself with positive influences. Practice self care and affirmations daily. Learn and grow through education and experiences.” These are not empty words. They are principles Awethu applies personally.

The dream does not stop at modelling. Awethu plans to launch a fashion brand rooted in African pride. “The vision is to create a brand that showcases authentic African designs, heritage, and craftsmanship while blending modern aesthetics,” Awethu explains. “The aim is to promote cultural pride, provide economic opportunities for local artisans, and make African fashion globally relevant and respected.” It is a bold plan, but Awethu speaks about it with clarity.

Fashion has influenced every part of Awethu’s life. “My love for fashion has inspired me to be more creative in everything I do,” Awethu says. “From designing my own outfits to influencing my study choices and personal branding.” Even challenges in the modelling industry have strengthened that focus. “I’ve encountered tough competition and the need to build a strong personal brand,” Awethu says. “I overcame these by focusing on professional training, networking, and staying authentic to my own style and values.”

Independence is another pillar. “Independence gives me the freedom to make my own choices and take responsibility for my career,” Awethu says. “I practice it by setting personal goals, managing my finances wisely, and making decisions that align with my vision for my brand and education.”

Looking ahead, Awethu is clear about priorities. “My priorities are to finish my studies in fashion design, gain diverse modelling experience, and develop a unique fashion line that reflects my cultural roots and personal aesthetic,” Awethu says.

Above all, Awethu wants people to understand the deeper meaning behind the name. “AWETHU stands for ‘OUR WOMEN,’” Awethu explains. “JUSSTiCE stands for justice for those who’ve been raped, abused and all. SERIES represents the world’s ongoing story with women leading the way. More episodes to come.” For Awethu, fashion is not just about clothes. It is about message, identity, and purpose stitched together with courage and hope.

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# Beyanké Maartens

## From Childhood Dreams to International Crown and Inspiring Teenage Leadership

Instagram:@beyankemaartens
TikTok:@beyanke_maartens

#Pageant

# Introducing Beyanké Maartens

## Miss Teen South Africa 2025

At just four years old, Beyanké stepped onto a stage for the first time. While most children were still figuring out what they wanted to be, Beyanké had already found her place under the bright lights. “My modeling journey started when I was just 4 years old,” Beyanké says with a smile. “I grew up in the industry and fell in love with the stage from a very young age.”

For Beyanké, pageants and fashion were never simply hobbies. They became part of her daily life and identity. “Pageants and fashion quickly became more than just activities — they became part of who I am,” Beyanké explains. Growing up surrounded by gowns, rehearsals, and runway practice shaped her confidence and gave her a strong sense of purpose early on.

When Beyanké made the decision to enter Miss Teen South Africa 2025, it was not a random choice. It was a step forward in a journey she had been building for years. “I wanted to challenge myself and grow,” Beyanké says.

“Even though the competition was only one day, it was intense, exciting, and life-changing. I knew I was ready to step into something bigger.” That one day would change everything. When her name was called as the winner, the moment felt almost unreal. “When my name was called, I was completely surprised and excited,” Beyanké recalls. “Everything felt unreal. It was a moment of pure joy and gratitude — a dream come true.” The applause, the crown, and the sash marked not just a victory, but a new chapter filled with responsibility.

For Beyanké, the title carries deep meaning. “Holding the title of Miss Teen South Africa 2025 means leadership, responsibility, and growth,” Beyanké says. “It’s about being a role model and using my voice to inspire other young girls.” She understands that wearing a crown is not only about beauty. It is about influence, character, and the example she sets for others watching her journey.

**In May 2026, Beyanké will take that responsibility even further when she represents South Africa internationally in Turkey. The opportunity to stand on a global stage fills her with pride. “Representing South Africa on an international stage in Turkey is a huge honour,” Beyanké says. “I feel proud and motivated to showcase our country with confidence and grace.”**

Preparation for such a moment is not taken lightly. Beyanké is committed to improving herself in every area. “I’m preparing physically, mentally, and emotionally,” Beyanké explains. “I focus on staying healthy, improving my runway skills, and strengthening my confidence and public speaking.” Every practice session, every workout, and every speaking opportunity is part of her plan to arrive ready.

Beyanké’s foundation in modeling runs deeper than most. She became part of Jenesaisquoi Modelling Academy at the age of four. It was more than just an academy to her. It was home. “I grew up in the academy,” Beyanké says. “Modeling has truly been part of my life since childhood.” Being closely connected to the academy’s leadership allowed her to experience the industry from both sides — as a student and later as a mentor.

**Stepping into a coaching role at a young age may seem unusual, but for Beyanké it felt natural. “Growing up in the academy allowed me to gain experience early,” Beyanké explains. “Stepping into a coaching role felt natural because I understand the journey the girls are on — I was once in their shoes.” Her ability to relate to younger models gives her a special connection with them.**

Some of Beyanké’s most meaningful moments have not happened on stage, but behind the scenes. “The most impactful moments have been helping young girls grow in confidence and teaching them to believe in themselves,” Beyanké says.

“Seeing their transformation is incredibly rewarding.” Watching a shy young girl find her voice and stand tall is, for Beyanké, just as powerful as hearing her own name announced as a winner.

Through it all, Beyanké remains grounded in a simple but powerful message. “Start where you are,” Beyanké says. “Believe in yourself. Confidence is built through courage and consistency. Never underestimate your potential.”

For Beyanké, the crown is not the final goal. It is a platform. And as she prepares to carry South Africa’s name onto an international stage, she does so with the same passion that began at four years old — determined to grow, to lead, and to inspire.

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# Lloyd Thabede

Mr. Gay Royal World Int. 2026 Representative

#Finalist

# Interview with Lloyd Thabede

## Mr. Gay Royal World Int. 2026 Representative

Lloyd Thabede, also known to those who love and respect him as Serurubele-Jones, is ready to take the international stage as South Africa's representative for Mr. Gay Royal World International 2026. Growing up in Tembisa, Lloyd learned lessons that go beyond pageantry and into life itself.

"Growing up in Tembisa was both challenging and inspiring," he says. "It's a township full of creativity, community spirit, and hard work. That environment taught me to stay true to myself and value authenticity." For Lloyd, those early years shaped the person he is today—someone who understands the importance of representation and using his voice for change.

His journey into pageantry began with curiosity. "I was drawn to the idea of using the stage not just for beauty or performance, but to share stories, inspire others, and advocate for inclusivity," he explains. "What started as a passion quickly became a calling."

Lloyd was motivated to compete for Mr. Gay Royal World International 2026 because he wanted to represent South Africa proudly and show that LGBTQ+ voices from townships like Tembisa matter. "This pageant is more than a competition—it's a chance to break stereotypes and celebrate diversity," he says. Being selected to represent his country is deeply meaningful. "It's a reminder that my journey, my identity, and my voice have value," he reflects. "It means carrying the hopes of my community and showing that visibility can inspire change."

When Lloyd learned he would be representing South Africa on the international stage, he was flooded with emotion. "I felt a mix of disbelief, joy, and gratitude. It was overwhelming, but also affirming—I knew that all the struggles and sacrifices had led to this moment," he recalls.

Preparing for the competition goes far beyond physical fitness. "I'm focusing on mental strength, cultural awareness, and advocacy work," he shares. "I'm working with mentors, refining my public speaking, and making sure I represent South Africa with dignity and pride."

Outside of preparing for the pageant, Lloyd has taken on the role of mentor for Star Face South Africa, a platform that nurtures young pageant talent. "My mentoring role came about naturally. Having walked the pageantry path myself, I wanted to give back," he says. "Guiding young talents has been one of the most rewarding parts of my journey."

On a day-to-day basis, mentorship is about presence and support. "It's helping with stage presence, confidence building, or even personal challenges. What I enjoy most is seeing young people discover their own power and purpose," Lloyd explains. His impact is clear: "I've seen mentees go from being shy and uncertain to winning major titles. Seeing that growth reminds me why mentorship is so important—it's about unlocking potential."

As a gay man from Tembisa, Lloyd brings a unique perspective to the pageant world. "Coming from Tembisa, I understand the struggles of visibility in marginalized spaces. I bring authenticity, resilience, and a voice that challenges stereotypes," he says. His journey hasn't been without challenges. "One of the biggest hurdles has been overcoming prejudice and proving that pageantry is about more than appearances," Lloyd admits. "I've faced doubts and discrimination, but I've overcome them by staying focused on my mission and refusing to compromise my identity."

Through both pageantry and mentorship, Lloyd is actively promoting LGBTQ+ visibility and acceptance. "Visibility is powerful—it empowers others to embrace who they are. My work is about creating safe spaces and amplifying voices," he says.

Balancing preparation for an international pageant with mentoring responsibilities requires discipline, he admits. "I dedicate time to my own preparation while ensuring I'm available for my mentees. It's not always easy, but the two roles complement each other—mentoring keeps me grounded, and competing keeps me motivated," Lloyd explains.

Looking ahead, he hopes to leave a legacy that inspires. "I want to leave behind a story that motivates others to dream boldly, live authentically, and use their platforms to uplift their communities," he says.

Lloyd Thabede's journey is proof that pageantry can be more than a stage—it can be a platform for change, representation, and empowerment. As he steps onto the global stage, South Africa will be represented by a man who not only shines but also lifts others along the way.

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